

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, January 14, 2009 at 7:03 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Giordano presiding and the following members present: Mr. Bernardini, Mr. DeWinne, Mr. Evans, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Franceschini, Ms. Rios, Mr. Spinelli and Mr. Ulrich. Absent: None.

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

Mr. Giordano announced that in compliance with the New Jersey meeting law commonly referred to as "The Sunshine Law," the Vineland Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting.

Flag salute:

Mr. Giordano welcomed back Debbie Marko, Reporter for the *Daily Journal*.

Special

Presentations:

None.

Comments by

Board Solicitor:

Mr. DeSanto said we are very actively involved in the current Abbott hearings that are scheduled before Judge Doyne who has been assigned by the Supreme Court to be hearing master. He said the state attempted to have the new funding law approved by the Supreme Court to substitute for the Abbott remedies that we have been dealing with over the years. The Education Law Center and districts have resisted that and the Supreme Court has declined to validate that law and have it substitute for the current Abbott requirements and relief. Mr. DeSanto said the Supreme Court has assigned Judge Doyne to take testimony with respect to the impact this new law would have on districts. He said Vineland has become a friend of the court and is participating in the process working very actively. Mr. DeSanto said in May Mr. Ottinger and Mr. Franchetta prepared a certification that was used in the oral argument before the Supreme Court and recently they prepared a certification update. He said the Education Law Center was so impressed with what the administration had done that they asked if they can use our certification as a model for other districts. Mr. DeSanto said our certification is used state wide to set forth what their impacts would be if this new law was adopted. In addition, Mr. Ottinger has been invited to testify as one of the witnesses before Judge Doyne because Vineland makes a very strong case.

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Mr. DeSanto said we have a district that is severely impacted by the regulations and not spending money recklessly such as Pleasantville, Paterson or Camden. He said those two combinations make our case and presentation one that the Education Law Center wants to make. Mr. DeSanto said the end of February or early March the hearings will take place and Vineland will be very much actively involved in that process.

Mr. Giordano asked if this was the appeals process. Mr. DeSanto responded no it is testimony showing how this funding would impact Vineland. Mr. Giordano asked if the possibility still exists to use that funding formula. Mr. DeSanto we are using the original process. If the Supreme Court disagrees with the Education Law Center and the districts and they uphold that statute it will now become the new process with no appeals.

Items for Review:

A. Superintendent

1. **Personnel Items** – Mr. Ulrich asked if the clerk typist promotions were because of years of service. Ms. Greenfield said a personnel policy was developed a number of years ago that if permanent clerk typists had three years of satisfactory service, in January they would be promoted to senior clerk typist. Mr. Ulrich asked what would happen if this was not done. Ms. Greenfield said they could apply for the title through Civil Service after a year. Mr. Ulrich asked if the administrative assistant who is resigning in March is leaving the district or resigning from that position. Ms. Greenfield said resigning from the district. Mr. Ulrich asked if we are going to conduct an exit interview for the administrative assistant who is leaving. Mr. Ottinger mentioned that he is going to become an assistant principal at Absegami High School. Ms. Greenfield said she did conduct an exit interview.
2. **Placement of Special Education Students** – No discussion.
3. **Budgetary Transfers** – No discussion.
4. **Submission of Grants** – No discussion.
5. **Acceptance of Funds** – Mr. Giordano questioned why the Target Grants are on for submission and acceptance. Mr. Franchetta said when these grants were brought to his attention the teachers were unaware that they had to ask permission before applying for the grant. He said that he is going to discuss this again with the principals at the next principal's meeting.

6. **Bids** - No discussion.
7. **Travel** – No discussion.
8. **Cancellation of Checks** – No discussion.
9. **Creation of Student Activity Accounts at Johnstone and Mennies Elementary Schools** – Mr. Spinelli asked why we are going to start this now. Mr. Franchetta said our high and middle schools have always had student activity accounts. He said that he met with all the elementary school principals about a year ago and discussed the responsibilities of having a student activity account. Recently these two schools, in order to raise money for field trips, decided that they wanted to start an activity account. Mr. Spinelli said his concern is that one of the issues in the audit was that they did not want all these accounts. Mr. Ottinger said he does not remember that. Mr. Franchetta said there is no interest at Johnstone School to have a PTO so in order to close their PTO account we are opening a student activity account. Mr. Spinelli asked Mr. Franchetta if all this will go through him. Mr. Franchetta said the accounting department monitors all the student activity accounts and reports are sent monthly to them where they are validated.
10. **Payment of Vacation Days** – Mr. Giordano asked if we are almost finished with this. Mr. Franchetta said these people have seven years to come forward and we are down to five years. Mr. Giordano asked what happens to those who do not come forward. Mr. Franchetta explained that each year a fiscal year is removed from the list so in five years the statute of limitations would be up.
11. **Payment of Legal Services to Employee** – Mr. Spinelli asked if this attorney is defending one of our employees against us. Mr. Ottinger said yes but against someone else.

Mr. Giordano asked what the total amount is. Mr. Franchetta said he thinks \$525.00.
12. **Acceptance of No Child Left Behind Funds** – No discussion.
13. **Rock Salt Inter-local Services Agreement with the City of Vineland** – Mr. Giordano asked if this was an inexpensive way for us to handle this. Mr. Ottinger said correct.
14. **Influenza Vaccines Inter-local Services Agreement with the City of Vineland** – Mr. Giordano asked if this is provided free of charge to anyone who meets the criteria. Mr. Ottinger said correct.

Mr. Franceschini asked if this year we are 100% compliant. Mr. Ottinger responded no it was extended to January.

15. **Cumberland County Technical Education Center Tuition Contract** – Mr. Franceschini asked where the technical center is next year in reference to going full-time. Mr. Ottinger said a major discussion is taking place right now between the tech center, college, county and local school districts to determine exactly what format a full-time facility would take and who would be responsible for what endeavors. He does not think there as been a resolution yet.
16. **Lenape High School Joint Transportation Agreement** – Mr. Giordano asked if this was for special education needs. Mr. Franchetta responded yes.
17. **VASA Contract Addendum #3** – Mr. Spinelli asked how this benefits us. Mr. Franchetta said it may encourage more people to retire. Mr. Ottinger said it is being correlated with the new state regulations, which do not permit benefits beyond what the contract calls for. Mr. Spinelli asked if this is for the current contract only and will renegotiate itself. Mr. Franchetta said that is correct. Mr. Spinelli said this actually benefits the administrators who want to retire. Mr. Ottinger said the board had a requirement for the administrators to advise them by November 1 if they were going to retire and because of the new regulations we are giving them a later date.
18. **UAW #2327 Contract Addendum #1** – No discussion.
19. **Supplemental Educational Services (SES) Contract** – No discussion.
20. **Cumberland County College Dual Credit Articulation Agreement** – No discussion.
21. **LaSalle University Clinical Program Agreement** – Mr. Ottinger said that Mr. DeSanto had some concerns about this agreement so he added in a form that is approved by the Superintendent and Board Solicitor.

Mr. DeSanto said we developed our own standard form of contract. On this contract in the event there is an injury caused by the student on our property the indemnification was eliminated.

Mr. Fanucci asked if the indemnification is in this agreement. Mr. DeSanto said it is without the indemnification. He said that he will request Mr. Ottinger to pull this from the agenda next week if it is not taken care of by then.
22. **University of Phoenix Agreement** – Mr. Spinelli asked what exactly this contract is for. Mr. Evans said it is a student teaching contract and does not think we should be forming an alliance with this company. Mr. Ottinger said some candidates are doing their teaching degree requirements online and this must be the requirement Phoenix has for student teaching. Mr. Spinelli feels this is too impersonal for student teaching.

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Mr. Evans said his issue is do we want to collaborate with a business that produces a product with a sixteen percent graduation rate at best. He said you need a high level of control and responsibility to get your degree online and commends anyone that can do it.

23. **The Richard Stockton College of NJ Agreement** – No discussion.

24. **LaSalle University Student Project** – Mr. Franceschini asked what the research was on. Mr. Ottinger said they are psychology majors.

Mr. Fanucci asked if this was common. Mr. Ottinger said not from the Philadelphia Universities.

25. **Election Polls Date and School Ballot Position Date** –No discussion.

26. **Donation to Mennies School** – No discussion.

27. **First Reading of Policy #3322, #4322, and #4433.1** – Mr. Giordano asked for a brief explanation of this.

Ms. Greenfield said on the vacation policy there was concerns that our twelve month employees would not be able to take their time during the summer because they were earning days each month. The Civil Service Regulations indicate that all ten and twelve month UAW employees can carry over one year's allotment each year.

Mr. Giordano asked if this will eliminate staff members using all their days at once. Ms. Greenfield said yes.

Mr. DeWinne said this seems like a very big challenge tracking all of this and accruing the expenses. He said it is a lot of data entering and commended those who do it.

B. Board

1. None.

Ms. Rios asked if the district has a list of companies that are contacted annually for different bids. Mr. Franchetta said we have an annual list approved every year for items that go out for bid. We maintain a listing of all possible bidders who we send the bids to. Ms. Rios asked if there was a company who was interested in dealing with our district who would they contact. Mr. Franchetta said they could contact Mr. Cox or me.

Review of Bills: Mr. DeWinne mentioned that he did not receive the bills in the board packet. He questioned the Apple Computer checks that were just under \$24,000. Mr. Franchetta said those purchases were for the non-public schools and paid under the technology grant. Mr. DeWinne asked if these purchases were for granted items. Mr. Franchetta explained that the private schools receive funding from the state based on the number of students they have. We are required to purchase the items, inventory them and give them to the private schools. Mr. DeWinne asked if this is part of our budget. Mr. Franchetta said it is special revenue.

Public Comments: Marilyn Goldstein, parent
Ms. Goldstein spoke in support of the Small Learning Communities at the high school.

Committee Reports: Mr. Spinelli said discussed at the Finance Committee meeting was the food service budget deficit. He said the state may no longer fund breakfast but still mandate it. Mr. Spinelli said many ideas were discussed that may help the food service department. Also discussed was the school based budgets. Mr. Spinelli said the schools were given predisposed ideas of their budget and what they had to have. Mr. Musterel helped each principal with their funds and what they actually needed. Mr. Spinelli said if Abbott rules in our favor we could replace many things that we removed. If less funding is received Mr. Ottinger requested for the principals to have a 5% reversed priority list. Mr. Spinelli said hopefully by February we will have an estimated budget. He said that Mr. Ottinger said under the present budget there will probably be no staff cuts only staff movement according to what the schools need. Mr. Spinelli said there will be a new Charter School in town, which could cost us about one million dollars. He said special education was discussed and the special needs students cost the district about twenty million dollars for about 1,300 children.

Mr. DeWinne mentioned that the county office is doing a good job in getting information to us sooner so we can be better prepared.

Mr. Ulrich asked if Mr. Rochetti's position has been posted yet. Mr. Ottinger said no but we will be in the near future.

Mr. Giordano asked if the principals have to be ready with a 5% reverse priority list. Mr. Ottinger said they have prepared this already. Mr. Giordano asked if that covers central administration as well. Mr. Ottinger said yes it covers everything.

Mr. Franceschini said at the Curriculum & Technology Committee meeting they reviewed the curriculum concerns that the staff had at the last Ad Hoc special meeting. He said the committee thought that Mr. Peter's responses were thorough and comprehensive. Mr. Franceschini said the committee thinks that Mr. Peters should give those responses to the teachers, which will hopefully help improve and maintain communication. He said they also discussed Blackboard. Mr. Franceschini said they would like a presentation given to the entire board on Blackboard before moving forward with it. He said also discussed at the meeting were the three policies on the agenda

Mr. Evans asked if the district technology supervisor is involved with Blackboard. Mr. Franceschini said he would hope so along with Mr. Franchetta. Mr. Evans asked where Mr. Dantine stands with Blackboard. Mr. Franceschini said Mr. Dantine does not mind Blackboard but there is also another system he likes as well, which is why he would like a presentation done. Mr. Ottinger said decisions of this sort are never made by one person. He said several meetings were held with principals, assistant superintendents along with the technology supervisor

Mr. Spinelli said what he understands is Blackboard is more expensive but we are going to get more out of it.

Mr. Evans said he would like to see a comprehensive comparison between Blackboard, Motile, and K-12.

Mr. Spinelli asked where we are as far as moving forward with this. Mr. Ottinger said we are waiting for approval to proceed but the board would like to have another presentation. Mr. Franceschini said the committee thought this could be presented to the board for the next meeting if possible. Mr. Spinelli said they will be comparing Blackboard to K-12 not the no cost software. Mr. Evans said it is out there and many school districts use it. Mr. Ottinger asked what school districts. Mr. Evans said he will have that information to him in the morning.

Mr. Ulrich said Blackboard is an extensive application that involves great expansion into the future. He said it is engaged at the university level, which would offer integration to our students. Mr. Evans asked why we need to integrate with a university here. Mr. Ulrich asked why would you not want a student to graduate and transition into college already using Blackboard. Mr. Evans said not all colleges use Blackboard.

Mr. Ottinger said we would like to get moving on this because compared to other districts our students are loosing out.

Mr. Evans said he thought the purpose of this was to put lesson plans on line for the teachers so parents can view them. Mr. Ottinger said that is already done. Mr. Evans asked what the goals of this application are. Mr. Ulrich said there are a lot of goals not just lesson plans. He said it is the ability for the teacher to create an environment with information for the child at home. Mr. Ulrich said we are trying to integrate our college bound seniors into the college world so why would we not allow them everything we could possibly do.

Mr. Franceschini said maybe Mr. Franchetta could put the questions Mr. Evans has in his presentation for next week. Mr. Ottinger said we are in the middle of the budget so maybe this presentation can be done in February. Mr. Franceschini asked what the cost of the two programs would be. Mr. Franchetta said he does not recall the exact cost but it was not that differential.

Mr. Giordano said if Mr. Franchetta prefers the program that is a little more expensive then that speaks volumes.

Mr. Fanucci asked if we have long range technology plans. Mr. Ottinger said we do but this is the most serious problem to get straightened out. He said that we have a lot of problems getting our equipment operational and usable for educational purposes. Mr. Fanucci feels it is important that this commitment takes place. He said as a board it is their responsibility to make a firm commitment to technology and continue to move forward.

Mr. Ulrich mentioned that Mr. Dantine's department is responsible for a broad range of services such as public safety and city services.

Mr. Bernardini said discussed at the Buildings & Grounds Committee meeting was the Vineland High School South school store. He said this would be a way to raise money for Project Graduation. Mr. Bernardini said students from the Architectural Design class worked on the design for the store. He said Vineland High School North is also interested in having a store. Mr. Ulrich asked if it would make more sense to have one store because we are one campus. Mr. Bernardini said there are students that do not leave the North building. Mr. Ottinger said most do not leave.

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Mr. Bernardini said no decision has been made on the school store only a presentation was given.

Mr. Spinelli asked who would run the store. Mr. Bernardini said Meredith Fiori, Mary Beth Banko and Jim Smith along with students. Mr. Bernardini said poles were installed by the electric utility at the girls' softball field. He said the athletic department will install the donated nets from Lincoln Falls. Mr. Bernardini said Mr. Weaver discussed the status of the proposed Middle School #2. He said at this point all of the original programs designed into the building are not going to be affected. Mr. Weaver will be meeting with the engineering firms and all involved with this project. Mr. Bernardini said we had problems with the steam pipes at Vineland High School South, which was forwarded to the state for reconsideration. He said that Mr. Weaver provided a draft of the Facility Budget Review, which included an additional \$350,000 to construct two new science labs at Vineland High School North. He said it was suggested to replace the current aluminum bleachers at Gittone Stadium because they are defective. Mr. Bernardini said the total cost would be \$40,000. He said Mr. Franchetta informed the committee that the lease for the Success building will be expiring and we will be vacating, which will save the district some money. Mr. Bernardini said that Ms. Rios asked about painting the halls at the North building. He said that Mr. Weaver stated that the halls were repainted less than five years ago and will look at doing some additional painting this year. Mr. Bernardini said several vendors questioned him regarding a letter they received in regards to not being able to donate to Project Graduation. He asked Mr. Ottinger for an explanation on this. Mr. Ottinger said we received a mandate from the state in regards to vendors contributing money to the district. He said our understanding was that vendors could not contribute to anything in the school district. Mr. Ottinger said because it was brought to our attention by Mr. Bernardini we turned the issue over to Mr. DeSanto to make sure we had the proper interpretation. He asked Mr. DeSanto to explain the decision that was reached. Mr. DeSanto said the regulations state that no person in the district should solicit or receive gifts and donations. He said clearly what those regulations are designed to do is guard against favoritism, extravagance and collusion. Mr. DeSanto said he does not see anything wrong with vendors contributing to a cause such as Project Graduation. However; because the words solicit appears we should not directly solicit vendors through staff, faculty or students asking for donations. Mr. DeSanto said we should do general solicitation such as newspaper, fliers or word of mouth.

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Mr. Bernardini mentioned to Debbie Marko from the *Daily Journal* that we should have a front page splash that Project Graduation is hurting and we need money. He announced that there will be a joint meeting in regards to regionalization with Cumberland and Salem held on January 26, if any board members are interested. He said board members will receive credits for attending.

Mr. Evans asked if we can recycle the bleachers for money. Mr. Bernardini said yes Mr. Weaver will handle that.

Unfinished Business: Mr. Giordano said at the December meeting Mr. Ottinger was asked to provide the board with a report regarding the security safety issue at Landis School, which he did. He said they will discuss this next week.

New Business: Mr. Giordano complimented the accounting department along with Mr. Franchetta, Mr. Rochetti and Mr. Ottinger in light of what Mr. DeSanto discussed earlier.

Mr. Spinelli also thanked the accounting department. He congratulated all the principals in regards to emails he has received on student involvement.

Mr. Bernardini congratulated the Finance Committee.

Mr. Ulrich said our district does a great job with students at the top end and special needs students. He said that he is glad to hear that the students in the middle are also succeeding.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned to executive session at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA
Board Secretary

KJF:df