

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the City of Vineland was held in the Board Room, 625 Plum Street, Vineland, New Jersey, Wednesday, August 10, 2011, at 7:05 p.m., pursuant to notice with Mr. Ulrich presiding and the following members present: Mr. DiGiorgio, Mr. Fanucci, Mr. Medio, Mr. Mercado, Dr. Mounier, Mrs. Phillips and Ms. Rios. Absent: Mr. English.

Also present: Dr. Banks, Superintendent, Dr. Gruccio and Dr. Elliott, Assistant Superintendents, Mr. Franchetta, Board Secretary, Ms. Nicole Curio, Associate Solicitor, Ms. Greenfield, Executive Director of Personnel, Mrs. Polof, Special Education Director, press and public. Absent: Mr. DeSanto, Solicitor.

Mr. Ulrich 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

Presentation (s): None.

Approval of Minutes: Upon motion by Mr. Fanucci, seconded by Mr. Mercado, the minutes were approved from July 6, 2011 and July 13, 2011. All Members voted "yes."

Report of the
Secretary/Custodian
Of School Monies:

Upon motion by Mr. Fanucci, seconded by Mr. Mercado, the reports of the Secretary and Custodian of School Monies for the month of June 2011, which are in agreement were approved as submitted and on file in the Minute Book, and the Board approved its monthly certification of budgetary major account fund status and the Board Secretary's monthly certification as on file with the Secretary. All Members voted "yes."

Solicitor's Report: None.

Public Comment on
Agenda Items: None.

Recommendations:

B. Proposed for review or discussion or adoption by Board Members: None.

Approval of Bills: Upon motion by Mr. Fanucci, seconded by Mr. Mercado, the bills were approved and warrants issued for same. All Members voted “yes” (\$8,210,592.06).

Mr. Medio requested the last finance committee meeting minutes. Mr. Fanucci said that meeting was only recessed at the time and has a conclusion this evening. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if it were possible to have these minutes and past minutes sent to the board after the meetings. Mr. Fanucci said those meetings were moved to public and are part of the online minutes that are posted. Mr. Ulrich said it is within our bylaws that the board chair forwards minutes to Mr. Franchetta and the board, which Mr. Franchetta keeps a record of. Mr. DiGiorgio encouraged the board to review those minutes. Mr. Fanucci said as you will recall once the board vote took place he was no longer the chair of that committee therefore, the board secretary was responsible for those minutes. Mr. DiGiorgio asked if it were possible to make all committees as a whole so there are no questions. Mr. Ulrich said he does not know if everyone has the time to attend every committee meeting and how practical it would be. He thinks the board has an effective system and this would personally not work for him.

Mr. DiGiorgio asked if we are ever charged extra for not paying a bill on time and do we receive discounts. Mr. Franchetta said we generally try to pay all bills on time so we do not incur the penalties. He said discounts are few and far between.

Emergent Item(s)
(with prior approval) None.

Public: Ruth Piatt, Co-owner of Little Lamb Preschool
Ms. Piatt said she is here to address the board on the following three issues: Board representation at provider meetings, parental school choice and budget concerns. Ms. Piatt said in past years a board representative was present at provider meetings to ensure transparency, accountability and an outside point of view to find solutions. She said Ms. Rios attended the last meeting held in May and she is requesting for this to continue.

Ms. Rios departed at 8:07 p.m.

Ms. Piatt said procedures for enrolling students this fall was changed from previous years. She said the new process limits parental choice. Ms. Piatt said she supports parental school choice in early childhood years and wants to be part of the solution. She expressed her concern in regards to all providers being paid on a timely basis.

Mr. Ulrich said that Ms. Piatt can make an appointment with Mrs. Bleistine or Dr. Banks to address any concerns that she may. Ms. Piatt said these issues have been addressed.

Carol Deola, All Kids First

Ms. Deola said one of the best things that ever happened in Vineland was the availability of preschool for the children in this district. She said for about eleven years families were given the right to choose the preschool of their choice. Ms. Deola said that choice was taken away from the parents this year and they were told they have no say. She said in the past if the school of their choice was full parents were given the opportunity to put their child on a waiting list until an opening was available. Ms. Deola urged the board to please listen with open hearts and ears and give parents back their right to choose the preschool of their choice. She thanked the board for giving her the opportunity to voice her opinion in helping to make the families and children of our community happy, safe and satisfied.

Ronald Walker, Parent

Mr. Walker expressed his concern in regards to students not being the first priority in the district.

Jill Chiovari Santandrea, Parent

Ms. Santandrea expressed her concern in regards to a parent's right to choose the preschool their child attends.

Anabell Myer, Parent

Ms. Myer expressed her concern in regards to a parent's right to choose the preschool their child attends.

Joseph Mikus, Parent

Mr. Mikus expressed his concern in regards to a parent's right to choose the preschool their child attends.

Dawn Holmes, Parent

Ms. Holmes expressed her concern in regards to a parent's right to choose the preschool their child attends.

Candice Gaynor, Parent

Ms. Gaynor expressed her concern in regards to a parent's right to choose the preschool their child attends.

Lee Burke, Vineland Resident

Mr. Burke said he watched the presentation given by Ms. Zoerb from the New Jersey School Boards Association on ethics and the board's roles/responsibilities. He said Ms. Zoerb's focus for the board was to concentrate on policy issues. Mr. Burke said the board's tone changed completely after Ms. Zoerb's presentation. He thinks all the QSAC and CAPA recommendations were necessary and important although some attitudes reflected a different perception. Mr. Burke said the board should watch what they say in public.

Jeff Ganyon, Parent

Mr. Ganyon expressed his concern in regards to a parent's right to choose the preschool their child attends.

Frank Fusco, Parent

Mr. Fusco expressed his concern in regards to a parent's right to choose the preschool their child attends

Mr. Ulrich urged anyone who has a specific complaint, such as an improper action by a daycare provider in our system, to please let us know. He said the process where the state notified us that we would be assigning children in a particular way has been a four year process. Mr. Ulrich said this year the preschool providers knew that it would be a 100% selection by the district in line with our equitable distribution alignment that all of our schools have. Mr. Ulrich said he has heard many positive things about All Kids First and Ms. Deola should be applauded on the job she has done there. However, there are other really good preschool programs. He said any individual provider can address administration with their concerns at tomorrow's provider meeting. Mr. Ulrich said some of the concerns are concerns that we do not have control over. He said that as a board we are going to do everything we possibly can to support our preschool providers who have been very good to our district. Mr. Ulrich encouraged all the providers to let their voices be heard.

Board Member

Remarks:

Mr. Medio said he is amazed about what he heard tonight. He asked if anyone is seriously go to tell him that some bureaucrat in Trenton told them that we have to take a three year old out of a preschool and send them across town to a different preschool as a four year old.

Dr. Elliott said as a mother of a two and a half year old she empathizes with the parents. She also knows what difficulties, statutes and regulations she is tasked with in her position as assistant superintendent. Dr. Elliott said one of the statutes is maintaining an equitable balance for all of our students from Pre-K through twelfth grades to the best of our ability. She said sometimes that is compromised due to logistics being the size of buildings, and populations served, which all have to be taken into account. Dr. Elliott said the parents who spoke tonight were parents of students who are in the private preschool program as toddlers or infants. She said some of our providers do have private childcare programs. Dr. Elliott said through names mentioned and conversations with parents it is because of the private childcare piece that these children attended All Kids First. She said as part of our new process if a child was a P3 for the 2010-2011 school year they would remain at their site for the 2011-2012 school year. Dr. Elliott said if there is a student who was a P3 last year and they are advancing to P4 staying in their same location with a sibling that will be a P3 this year, they will stay together at that location. She said the preschool demographics for the 2010-2011 school year showed some disparities that needed to be addressed. Dr. Elliott said we looked at our current Policy #6120 Assignment of Pupils. Part of that policy is to maintain an equitable balance of enrollment in each classroom and ensure that each school's population reflects the makeup of the community. Dr. Elliott said in the preschool contract received from the state on page #16 under VII Compensation B. it states that "The District will provide centralized registration. One hundred percent (100%) of the slots may be filled by the Vineland Board of Education (VBOE) by assignment of students from the District's list." Dr. Elliot said the district list is comprised of everyone who goes through the registration process. Mr. Medio asked why the district could not say that 70% of the slots in all schools would be assigned by parental choice first come first serve and the other 30% be assigned by equitable balance.

Dr. Elliott said currently we are in alignment with our assignment of pupils' policy for the 2011-2012 school year.

Mr. Medio said last year we did not have these problems and we work on something to create problems. He said as Mr. Walker stated we never end up discussing education or students and there are always problems that are created by state regulations or a policy that makes no sense. Mr. Medio said we have distraught unhappy parents who care with little children. He said the best way to get rid of parental involvement is to have unhappy parents of three and four year old preschoolers. Mr. Medio feels the policy needs to be revisited and changed.

Dr. Elliott explained that the registration for preschool began March 28th and continues throughout the summer. She said part of Policy #5120 offers a caveat that if you are assigned to a home school that is not of your choice you have the ability to write a letter to the Assistant Superintendent for Administration for consideration. This is based on slots available and maintaining the equitable balance in each of the schools. Dr. Elliott said the preschool angle is different because we are restricted in class size and cannot go over fifteen students. She said we are also restricted because each of our centers house a different amount of students. Dr. Elliot said she has received 425 request letters district wide for each of the preschool providers. She said of that she divided them by provider. Dr. Elliott said she looks at every situation and has parents who have requested certain providers for medical reasons. She said those letters are under the review of our district physician and awaiting his determination. Dr. Elliott said now it is a very fluent process because we have students registering, moving and dropping for many different reasons. She said home school does take precedence and the student has to be registered. Dr. Elliott said if a student attends their home school they are given transportation. If a student is granted a requested school they are not guaranteed transportation.

Mr. Ulrich said the providers can voice their concerns through the administration in the district.

Dr. Elliott said this meeting is for AED training and all the preschool providers will be given AED equipment for their sites. She said we will review all of the information received from the state based on Mrs. Piatt's concerns

Dr. Mounier asked if we would be having this difficulty if we did not have to contend with equitable balance. Dr. Elliott said the difficulty also lies in the classroom size of fifteen and the preschool populations. Dr. Mounier asked if this turmoil is related to putting children into schools to achieve some sort of harmonic composition amongst the population in each of the schools. Dr. Elliott said that is a piece of why we decided to go with this process, which is also required by the contract. Dr. Mounier asked if the class size of fifteen is new. Dr. Elliott said no.

Mrs. Phillips thanked Mr. Walker for speaking tonight and said he is correct in saying that we need to always focus on the students. She thanked all the preschool program parents who attended tonight's meeting because their children will definitely be successful in life.

Mr. DiGiorgio thanked the people who spoke tonight and said as far as he is concerned the students are always first. He said tonight he expressed concern over items #17 and #18 the assistant superintendents and business administrator contracts. Mr. DiGiorgio said he is not against anyone receiving an increase however; there is a process he has questions about along with items in the agreement. He said there may be language that needs to be changed in these contracts as was done in the other contracts.

Mr. Mercado thanked all the parents who came out tonight. He said that he looks forward to hearing what took place at tomorrow's provider meeting.

Report/Remarks by
Board President:

Mr. Ulrich echoed the comments made by Mrs. Phillips. He said the children of these parents will succeed no matter where they are at because their parents care. He said unfortunately we have to make decisions governed by codes and laws and have to work within the parameters of the Department of Education. Mr. Ulrich said he agrees with Mr. Walker and sometimes we lose focus on what is really important.

Adjournment: The Board adjourned the meeting by voice vote at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin J. Franchetta, CPA
Board Secretary

KJF:df