

The board meeting will also be available via zoom and live streamed on YouTube.)

School Board Members Absent: Tim Kelly, Diana Cayer (Student Rep)

Also Attending: Marianne Hutchinson, Bethany Meehan-Poulin, Lorna Hutchinson,
Corina Lee, Hillary Ringle?

Barbara Chow, Board Chair, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:32pm. Audience introductions were made. Everyone on zoom and YouTube were welcomed.

1. Motion to add the following: VII Supt. Report of resignations
Motion: L. Whittington Seconded: D. Whittemore
Motion Carried

- Minutes of the November 28, 2023 Board Meeting
Motion: L. Whittington Seconded: D. Whittemore
Larry wants to amend New Business #2 to include a quote he made. He will send it to Pam & Cathy to have added to the minutes
Motion Carried

E. Couture- Works in the district and served his country. He supported the book being removed from the library. There needs to be room for all types of beliefs, literature and opinions. He does agree there are limits to what can and should be allowed in schools. He also agreed that all books in the library should be age appropriate for the grade level the library supports. This new policy is too big, it's open to individual interpretation. The policies we currently have should be sufficient. He believes the school librarians do a fantastic job sorting through the thousands of books published every year and should be commended on their diligent work and should not be condemned because someone disagrees ideologically on a book(s) that they procure.

J. Couture- She agreed with everything that Earl had to say. She wanted to add that she knows the librarian @ DES and she knows how hard she works to make sure the books she chooses are appropriate for all ages and for all ideas at our school. She feels the policy is too vague. We have hired these professionals to do a job that we need to let them do.

B. Meehan-Poulin- Mom of 2 students, one that graduated and one that is currently attending. She would trust any book that the librarians put into her child's hand. If there should be anything that she disagreed with, we have existing policies to address that already. We have to trust the professionals that we put in charge. She would really like the board to move forward and look at other issues that affect our children all day, every day. We have rampant drug use in our community. Our kids need support, their families are struggling. We have a lack of other courses beyond the core that are offered. We have other areas that we could be putting a lot of our emotional time into. Would like to see the board get back to creating really awesome schools, as they have done for a long time. This has been sad to watch.

COMMUNICATIONS

No new communications

NEW BUSINESS

1. Presentation on how materials are selected for the school libraries (Cindy Petherbridge, Kristin Arsenault)

Selection: Policy IJJ

Selection Considerations:

Basic Considerations:

“A certified library-media specialist will be responsible for overseeing the library-media program, under the supervision of the Superintendent.” Policy IJJ

- Accuracy and currency of material
- Importance of the subject matter
- Scholarship
- Quality of writing and production
- Reputation and significance of the author, artist or composer

Wide Range and Relevance:

The library will provide “...a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal and the presentation of different points of view...” Policy IJJ

- Maine System of Learning Results
- Varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of students
- Foster respect and appreciation for diversity
- Comprehensive, accurate and balanced representation of minorities and women
- Balance of opposing sides of controversial issues
- Stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetics and ethical standards
- Information that will enable students to make intelligent decisions in their daily lives
- Respect the constraints of the school unit's budget

Professional Selection Information:

“Before recommending materials for purchase, professional staff should evaluate the existing

collection, consulting reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids and specialists from all departments and/or all grade levels.”

Policy IJJ

- Booklist, American Library Association (1905)
- Kirkus Review (1933)
- Publisher’s Weekly (1872)
- School Library Journal (1954)
- Common Sense Media (2003)

Individual School Needs and Existing Resources:

“Meeting the needs of the individual schools, based on the knowledge of the curriculum and the existing collections of instructional and library-media materials, shall be the highest priority.”

Policy IJJ

- Curriculum supported materials ordered by RSU 56 (ie. Amplify CKLA)
- NWEA lexile scores (reading levels)
- Vetted recommendations from colleagues, parents, and students
- Digital Maine Library database NoveList
- Library Media Connection

Recognitions and Awards:

ALA Youth Media Awards, given annually in January *= elementary level, **= high school level

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| ● John Newbery Award | Stonewall Award | Michael L. Printz** |
| ● Caldecott Award * | Coretta Scott King Award | YALSA Award for |
| ● Theodor Seuss Geisel Award * | Robert F. Silbert Medal | Nonfiction** |
| ● Pura Belpre Award | Schneider Family Book Award | Alex Award** |

Maine Based Book Awards:

Chickadee Award* Maine Student Book Award The North Star YA Award**

Voted on by students from a nominee list, awarded annually in April

Every book considered is **evaluated individually** for relevance to **our students** and according to policy.

Oversight: Policy and Practice

Individual Student Considerations:

Parental Authority

“The Board recognizes that the final authority as to what materials an individual student will be exposed rests with the student’ parents or guardians. However, at no time will the wishes of one child’s parents to restrict his/her reading or viewing of a particular item infringe on other parents’ rights to permit their child to read or view the same material.”

Policy IJJ

- Policy and procedure for complaints and concerns
- Catalogs are publicly available and searchable at any time via district websites.

Student Selection:

Provide for “enrichment opportunities that expand students’ interests and contribute to a desire for lifelong learning,”

Policy IJJ

- Library materials are available for students as a supplement to their required instructional materials, they are not individually assigned.
- Library staff will never choose a book for a reader or force a student to read a book they are not interested in.

- Library staff offer a number of titles related to the students' request for their considerations.

L. Whittington wanted some of his comments be added to the minutes for the record. What happened last meeting and continuing tonight is promoting the rhetoric of hate. RSU 56 should be combating that force of negativity by not accepting the attack on our librarians. RSU 56 deserves and already has transparency. Pam has reminded this Board and the community that all curriculum and books are in public view. Moreover, students and parents at the last meeting reminded this Board that this not appropriate and should not be accepted. Some of the public comments stated that if this policy went through: several texts would be eliminated from the classroom, it would affect students current and future, it could have emotional impact on students, and finally it would have economic impact on community throwing out thousands of books. Some of those comments alluded to the fact that this could be considered book banning. And finally, and this the following cannot be emphasized enough, ACTIONS AND WORDS HAVE CONSEQUENCES!!!!

In 2022, more than 1,300 teachers, education technicians, administrators and other educators in Maine left their jobs, and more than half of them did so in June or August. The state also reported that 927 educators retired. In both cases, the totals are the most in the past seven years.

The Board has many problems to address. Keeping highly qualified and professional educators should not be one of them. That success is already in place. But first and foremost, an agenda with both the parents and School Board working together is needed. The Board needs to listen to what the public has to say. Not creating a setting emboldened with negativity, division and a hostile education atmosphere for our future generations BUT supporting our dedicated educators and their long hours of preparation before and after the school day in the classroom. With all parties working together, our students can all be successful and productive members of society.

There was much discussion and some questions about how materials/books are selected. Some board members feel there is a concern in the community. It was brought up again that maybe there should be a rating system for books, another district implemented one. It was also mentioned that there is a process for complaint should any parent question a book. The board then decided to bring this back to the policy committee for more dialogue.

2. Overview of ELO (Extended Learning Opportunity) position in WORC (Workforce Opportunities in Rural Communities) grant (Pam Doyen)

Applicant: Northern Forest Center

Facilitated through Maine West

Subrecipients: Community Concepts (build network of businesses), Rural Aspirations (Professional Development around Extended Learning Opportunities, and Western Maine School Districts) (Telstar, Oxford Hills, Buckfield, Mountain Valley and Dirigo)

Highlights:

- The WORC grant will provide partial funding for each school's ELO Coordinator salary for three years, starting in year 1 or 2, depending on the school.

- Each school will have access to \$4,000 per year to cover costs associated with participant support, things that will help make it possible for a student to participate.
- ELO Coordinators will be required to participate in monthly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to build common systems across schools, troubleshoot ongoing challenges together, and build out a comprehensive regional asset map of businesses and organizations willing to host student ELO's.
- ELO Coordinators/schools will be required to collect specific information on each participant throughout the life of the grant using a specific reporting format. Templates and systems for reporting will be provided.
- Each subrecipient will be required to provide quarterly narrative reports documenting progress on the grant's workplan and goals. Templates and systems for reporting will be provided.
- Subrecipients are required to use accrual-based accounting and to submit quarterly invoices in order to receive funds.
- Each school will have access to professional development facilitated by Rural Aspirations to design and implement school-wide systems and instructional strategies that connect student learning to community opportunities.
- The grant provides 5 days in year one, 3 days the second year and 2 days the final year. Rural Aspirations will work with individual schools to create PD plans.

There was a consensus of the board for this to move forward.

3. Request to add an assistant coach for nordic at TWKDMS (Nick Karavas)

Nick explained that with the number of nordic skiers this year there is a need for an assistant coach for TWKDMS. This position is not currently in the contract. This would allow the AD to hire one.

Motion: B. Dyer

Seconded: N. Sneller

Motion Carried

4. Second Reading of policy JICA Student Dress

Motion: N. Sneller

Seconded: D. Whittemore

Opposed: K. Szostek

Motion Carried

OLD BUSINESS

1. Region 9 Updates (Bruce Ross/ Brian Keene/ Wayne Thurston)

They have not met since our last meeting.

2. Strategic Planning Update (Pam Doyen)

Reminder- that we have a community forum this Saturday, Dec 16th 9-11 here at Dirigo High School. We will continue to gather community input via the survey (which can be found on our website, www.rsu56.org) as well. We have our next Strategic Planning Committee meeting next Monday, Dec 18 at 5:30 in the DHS library. We will be reviewing the survey and information gathered at the community forum.

3. Update on School Resource Officer (Pam Doyen)

I will be meeting with Chris Wainwright again this Friday to finalize the contract. The goal is to have the contract finalized on December 19 and the hiring process completed in January. The hope is to have the SRO in place by the end of January.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Superintendent's Report: Pam Doyen

Reminder- next Thursday, December 21 is an early release day. Student dismissal will be at 11:30. It is the last day before the December break. We will return to school on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

Administrator Report: Heidi Connelly, Director of Special Services

Students District Wide	Students with an Active IEP	% of students with an Active IEP
756	126	16.66%

Disability	Student Count	% of Spec Ed Students (rounded)
Specific Learning Disability	53	42%
Other Health Impairment	21	17%
Autism	15	12%
Speech of Language Impairment	14	11%
Emotional Disturbance	10	8%
Intellectual Disability	6	5%
Multiple Disabilities	5	4%
Visual Impairment	2	2%

LRE Setting	Student Count	% of Spec Ed Students (rounded)
Regular Class Placement (inside the regular class 80% or more of the day)	66	52%
Resource Room Placement (inside the regular classroom 79-40% of the day)	43	34%
Self-Contained Placement (inside the regular classroom less than 40% of the day)	17	13%

- The special education department is fully staffed at this time which I feel very grateful for as many districts across the state are struggling significantly to remain appropriately staffed. (with the exception of a resignation of one of the Special Ed Ed Techs announced tonight. We have a possible candidate already). Being fully staffed with special education teachers and Ed techs ensures we are able to provide critical education services to our students.
- Statewide the percentage of students with identified disabilities in 2022 was 19.49% which is above the nationwide average of approximately 15%. Total percentage for our district in 2022 was 17.50% and thus far we are at 16.66% of our total population this year.
- The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the law that guides special education and requires that all students receiving special education services must receive those services in the least restrictive environment meaning they should be in settings and learning alongside their peers of the same age when they are able to do so.
- The Department of Special Services at the DOE has changed their title to the Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education. ALL students learn differently which is the basis of inclusive education. Ways that I am supporting our district with regards to inclusion include: co-teaching,

special education ed techs and teachers pushing in at specific times during the day to teach, supporting the transition of students from out of district placements to returning to their home schools, closely examining the data to ensure specially designed instruction is provided at the right level and in the right environment, professional development, and ongoing conversations about universal design for learning and how we tailor our instruction to meet the individual learning styles of students, changing our language as it relates to special education from it being a program to actually being a service a general education student receives.

- We have 11 students currently enrolled in two different out of district placements (WFRP and MMCC). We have one student who transitioned back from WFRP last year to our middle school and we have one transitioning back into our high school by this spring and another who is at the very beginning stages of transitioning back to DES.
- From last year we were able to generate billing and reimbursement for some of our services through MaineCare. This included billing for psychological services, occupational therapy services, and physical therapy services. The total reimbursed was \$17,858.00.

Reporting of New Hires:

James Cloutier, Bus Aide

Stipended and Coaching Positions:

Kaitlyn Woods- DHS Cheering

Tom Kelly- DHS Girls JV Basketball

Resignations/Retirements:

Ashley Calden, DHS School Secretary

Katherine Morse, DES Spec Ed Ed-Tech

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Student Representative Report-N/A- D. Cayer -Basketball practice
2. Policy Committee- Will check to schedule the policy meeting for the first board meeting in January
3. Finance Committee-Waiting to schedule something with Mary-tentatively scheduled for a meeting in January
4. Curriculum Committee- Jason has scheduled a meeting for Jan 23 5-6:15pm
5. Buildings & Grounds Committee- Not met- Next meeting is Jan 12, 2024
6. Negotiations Committee- Still meeting
7. Personnel Committee- Rescheduling to Feb 13
8. Ad-hoc Committee- Met today- Talked about Diversity Day- Building Empathy- Key Notes will be Operation Reboot, 4 sessions throughout the day students can pick which to go to and then at the end of the day the Key Note will be from the Maine Holocaust. MS will have different groups they will have food from different cultures. At DES they will go over civil rights violations. They covered what a major civil rights infraction was with discussion.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

B. Dyer- As Larry just mentioned, at the elementary school they are talking about what a civil rights infraction might be? P. Doyen: Talking with teachers about what civil rights infractions might look like.

B. Dyer: So that day is not for children? Pam: No it is not for children.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Enter into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. subsection 6A to discuss the evaluation of the Superintendent of schools.

Motion: D. Whittemore

Seconded: N. Sneller

Motion Carried

Entered into executive session at 8:26pm

Exited executive session at 9:33pm

1. Motion pertaining to executive session, if applicable

Motion: B. Dyer made a motion to extend the Superintendent's 3 yr contract out one more year.

Seconded: N. Sneller

Motion Carried

ADJOURNMENT

1. Motion to adjourn

Motion: N. Sneller

Seconded: L. Whittington

Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 9:36pm