

Alburgh School Board Meeting

11/17/2014

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Administration: Superintendent- Robert Phillips, Principal- Janet Cerro, Head of Student Support Services- Beth Hemmingway

Public: Cheryl Wells, Steven Reed, Ramona Reed

Faculty: Diane Baker, Mary Ann Galica, Wendy Savage, Angela Prefontaine, Mr. Bushey, Ms. Kramer, Tracy Giroux, Jennifer Mitchell, Al Hammel, Kayla Patno

Board: Skip Prairie, John Goodrich, Alton Brusco, Michael Savage, Allyson Sweeney

Mr. Savage called the meeting to order at 5:00pm. Adjustments to the agenda include discussion under Principals Report, Superintendent's Report and Discussion in Executive Session about a student matter. Minutes were approved as amended on a motion by Mr. Goodrich (2nd Mr. Prairie) (Unan.).

Public Input:

One family member informed all in attendance that another family was pulling their children out of the school due to the ongoing concerns. That particular family was unable to be at the meeting tonight, but they gave permission for that information to be shared.

Ms. Cerro addressed questions and concerns brought up at the last School Board meeting. For complete details, please refer to questions and answers compiled by Ms. Cerro.

Ms. Cerro discussed having a walk-thru with the Sheriff and Fire Chief to assess school safety. The safety committee was present for this walk-thru. They will be compiling their findings and plan to present it in mid-December. Mr. Bushey along with other staff members will be attending the Governor's Conference this month that is focusing on public safety.

Family brought up concerns around the kindergarten class-size. Ms. Cerro asked that the Board consider making the classroom support person a full-time position. Currently, it's split between the Pre-K and Kindergarten. Families are volunteering their time for classroom assistance and to provide another set of eyes and bodies in this space.

Principal's Report:

Current enrollment is 211 students.

Al Hammel gave a presentation and demonstration about the Moodle and technology in our school for students. With this, he asked that we take technology into consideration as we plan

the budget for next year. Many of our computers are dying and need replacement. Not only that, but they need to be able to support and run the programs we are using in the school on behalf of our students education.

Unpaid Leave:

In the past, staff members have been able to take "unpaid leave" rather than using benefit time that's been earned. This is only happening among support staff. The Superintendent will check with the Labor Laws to make sure there are no violations in continuing to do this.

Executive Session:

Mr. Goodrich motioned (2nd Mr. Brusio) that we enter Executive Session at 6:45pm with Mr. Phillips, Ms. Cerro, Ms. Hemmingway, Mr. Bushey and Ms. Kramer in attendance additional to the Board to discuss a student matter.

Executive session ended at 7:06pm.

Superintendent's Report:

Mr. Phillips went over the budgeting timeline and procedures to follow.

Ms. Hemmingway went over anticipated FY16 Special Education Budget.

Universal Access Pre-K: Act 166 makes every district in the state required to offer Pre-K to ages three & four. It's a proven fact that 80% of the brain is developed in the first three years. This is something we will have to take into consideration for next year as it may bring a higher registration among the children aged three & four.

Board Discussion:

Time Clock- Taken off the agenda.

Code of Conduct- One was sent out to students for the basketball season. We still hope to revise this once it is improved.

Mr. Savage discussed a student who is leaving this school and the families desire to have their child continue to be a part of our school sporting team. The family will remain residents of Alburgh, but their children will be attending Folsom School.

A high school student's family that recently moved to Isle La Motte would like their student to ride the school bus pro-rated for the remainder of the year.

Mr. Phillips is in communication with the Town Clerk and State to see what is scheduled to be destroyed this year as far as our files go. Once we know what that looks like, a secure shredding company will stop at the Town Office to pick up and secure the documents.

Board Action:

Mr. Goodrich (2nd Mr. Bruso) motioned that we accommodate a confidential request for a child to play on our basketball team even though he is not a student in our school (Unan.).

Mr. Goodrich (2nd Mr. Prairie) motioned that approve payment of the accounts payable as presented (Unan.).

Mr. Prairie (2nd Mr. Goodrich) motioned that we authorize Mr. Phillips to offer a contract for bussing to an Isle La Motte student to NCCS in the amount of \$500.00 for the remainder of 2014/2015 school year (Unan.).

Mr. Goodrich (2nd Mr. Prairie) motioned that we adjourn at 8:21pm (Unan.).

Respectfully Submitted,

Alton Bruso

John Goodrich

Skip "Rene" Prairie

Allyson Sweeney

Michael Savage- Chair

Alburgh School Board Meeting
November 3, 2014

Public Input: **From First Grade Parents**

Two weeks ago parents addressed the board regarding classroom safety and a productive learning environment. These conversations lead to other topics such as general communication and the daily schedule. We shared our concerns, were reassured that our children were safe in the classroom, and then we left as the board went into executive session. This is what we know to be the result of that meeting:

- 1) A counselor from NCSS was brought in to process with the first grade students regarding violence in the classroom.
- 2) Parents were made aware of this counselor through written notification
- 3) The discipline expectations and consequences were sent home to first grade parents
- 4) The school handbook was sent home to all families
- 5) The student exhibiting violent behavior is no longer in the classroom

This week we would like a follow-up from the board and administration. Here are our questions & points of discussion:

- 1) Are the above points accurate? Were any additional steps taken, not deemed "confidential" that we can be made aware of?
 - **The above points are accurate, Due to FERPA guidelines; the administration is not able to provide further information or confirm item number 5.**
- 2) Safety: Are there still safety concerns in the first grade classroom? Do we have a crisis plan? What the plan for repeated "major behaviors" is as outlined in the handbook? If there is a plan, how did things go so far for so long? Under "minor behaviors" *physical contact/physical aggression (non-violent)* is listed, what does that mean? Ms. Cerro repeatedly said at the last meeting that the student support team takes every case seriously. Does that team have enough resources to meet every student's needs? Who determines that? How does the school plan to earn parents trust back?
 - **Considering the current needs of both new and returning students to the school, the Student Support Team of Janet, Erik, Kathleen, Stephanie and Felicia do not feel that we have sufficient resources to address the social and emotional needs of students. We feel that we need a planning room with an advisor to allow us to focus upon the multiple levels of responsibility that we all have yet are unable to effectively fulfill.**
- 3) Communication: Although we are very appreciative for the recent communication, we want more. Events at the school, positive and negative alike, should be communicated to parents. We keep hearing that we are a "SWIFT" school that fosters collaboration with students and families. We need to know what is going on at school to collaborate and support.

- One of the Alburgh School's Restructuring Plan goals was for a school and community council to be formed (RST04). The target completion date for this task was May 2014. This year the Alburgh School and Community Council (ASSC) began meeting monthly.
 - Other venues other than the school website that provide parents with information about the school include letters sent home by Principal (fleas, water heater, etc.), Alburgh Almanac, weekly newsletters written by faculty that are placed in Friday folders. The principal will begin sharing her monthly report with parents that will include important news about the school and upcoming events.
- 4) **Schedule:** We think the schedule this year warrants a conversation with the board, parents, teachers and even students. The shortened and early lunch, the earlier start to the day, and the later end to the day has impacted everyone. 10 minutes here and there may not seem like a lot when looking at it on paper, but it has made a huge impact on kids. We are not really sure how tired, hungry kids, and teachers with less time to collaborate and plan could actually increase student performance.
- The 2012 - 2015 Alburgh School Restructuring Plan outlined in Goal # 2, Objective CIN02, Task # 5 states that a Master Schedule would be developed to "maximize teaching and learning time".
 - Alburgh became a SWIFT school last year and thereby committed itself to developing a Multi-tiered System of Support and Integrated Educational Framework.
 - The SWIFT Domains and Features were aligned with the Green Mountain Star Indicators (Alburgh Restructuring Plan management system used by the Vermont Agency of Education) to create a fluid process.
 - Throughout our first year as a SWIFT school, the Leadership Team led discussions with faculty and staff at Universal faculty meetings and GISU In-service regarding the SWIFT Framework and collected data (strengths and opportunities) as it related to each Domain.
 - A SWIFT Data Snapshot was completed following our work during year one (Exploration Phase) which included data from our first Fidelity of Investment Tool (FIT) and Fidelity of Assessment Tool (FIA). Each of these assessments included the perspectives of faculty, staff and parents. An opportunity was identified in the Data Snapshot that called for "increased instructional time through the revision of the master schedule with longer, dedicated content blocks, and time for daily intervention and enrichment".
 - Using the instruments and information mentioned above, the principal outlined Key Changes for the 2014-2015 Master Schedule which highlighted; additional time for instruction for students to dig deep into ideas as the Common Core Standards demand; creating intervention blocks by starting the school day ten minutes earlier, shortening lunches by ten minutes and ending the school day five minutes later. These changes were shared with the School Board at the

start of the year and parents were notified of the changes in a letter from the principal.

- The outline for a new master schedule was created in the Principal's office on a large white board about six weeks before the end of the school year and all teachers were given numerous opportunities to provide feedback and many teachers filled in their schedules on the whiteboard. Teachers were also given an opportunity to tweak and individualize their instructional schedule within the framework (Key Changes) set forth earlier.
 - In at least two other schools in the GISU, primary students eat lunch prior to 11:30 am and at least one other school has changed to a twenty minute lunch.
 - After receiving some concerns from the primary teachers and several parents regarding students not having enough time to eat, the principal arranged for the primary students to eat between 5 -7 minutes earlier and the principal scheduled herself in the cafeteria each day when primary students arrived for lunch to assist students during serving.
 - It was brought to the Leadership Team that the middle school team indicated that having three core subjects in a row was too demanding for the students and therefore they were encouraged to create a natural break as the saw fit.
 - A second FIT (staff, parents, & community members) was conducted several weeks ago and the results indicate that our strengths as a school include: the development of a master schedule that includes dedicated intervention time (Domain; Administrative Leadership) and that faculty and staff are actively engaged in discussions about individual students (Domain: Integrated Educational Framework).
 - A survey was conducted last week regarding our master schedule and results indicated positive responses regarding increased instructional time (intermediate and middle school), common planning time (primary and intermediate), and consistency of electives and length of classes is appropriate (unified arts, intermediate, and middle). There will be many opportunities for further developing the master schedule for next year that include: scheduling an elective after two core middle school classes, revisiting what our intervention blocks look like, assuring that social and emotional skill development / teaching is a priority for primary classrooms. Similar to last year, all teaching staff will be given an opportunity to help construct next year's schedule.
- 5) **Math Support:** There is still no support for students in math since the Math Title position has yet to be filled. What is the plan for those students?
- An active search still continues for a math interventionist. There are two new applicants for the position that will be considered for an interview. The challenge has been locating an applicant that has a math background.
- 6) **Parent Feedback:** In the past parents were asked to complete surveys regarding their experience with the school. Why is it no longer offered?

- The school hosted a parent information night during the formation of our new school vision. There were a number of parents who participated in this process thereby having their voices heard.
- Creating a parent survey will be a wonderful topic for the ASSC to discuss and plan.

7) Unified Arts: There seems to be a huge difference in the amount of time students spend in unified arts this year compared to the past. For example, some classes do not have art this trimester and there are no regular guidance classes. Could this be part of why the student support team is so overwhelmed? Guidance classes in the past were pro-active, teaching kids positive behaviors and social cognition. Without this curriculum are cases for the student support team on the rise, causing a reactive approach?

- Faculty and staff at the Alburgh school have submitted to the principal their 'wish lists' for the upcoming school year and consensus is that we need to return the Guidance position to full time and increase the art teaching position. In the Guidance Counselor's abbreviated schedule, she serves/teaches all students at some point during the school year.