

In Board Briefs, we summarize key agenda items and discussion topics from previous Board of Education meetings. Full meeting minutes are usually not available until approved by the Board at a subsequent meeting. The community is encouraged to attend each meeting, and the Board welcomes questions and comments. Previous Board Briefs can be found on the district website [here](#).

October 7, 2019 Board of Education Meeting

After an executive session and the Pledge of Allegiance, the regular monthly public meeting was called to order. A public hearing was held regarding the realignment of the Code of Conduct to support restorative practices. Restorative practices educate students on understanding the impact their mistakes may have on others in the learning community and thereby addresses discipline as an opportunity for social emotional growth. Dr. Rogers stated that the NYS Bar Association invited a number of educators, including Deputy Superintendent Ms. Adele Bovard, to participate in a statewide task force responsible for making recommendations on discipline in school districts, with the goals of supporting students as they learn from mistakes they may make and becoming positive members of society. Ms. Bovard presented the three key recommendations the task force made to the NYS Education Department as a result of the work; including incorporating restorative practices in the guiding philosophy of discipline, aligning the Code of Conduct, and changing the law relative to long term suspensions to better support the notion of restorative practices. Ms. Bovard reviewed how these recommendations have been translated into the work being done at Syosset in the elementary, middle and high school levels, including the five pillars of support that make up Syosset's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Plan and the inclusion of restorative practices. She noted the Code has been renamed the Code of Character, Conduct and Support to more accurately reflect its intention. Ms. Bovard then introduced a representative of the PTA, a high school student, a high school teacher and an Administrator who each provided their perspective and feedback on the updated Code of Character, Conduct and Support.

Board President Tracy Frankel inquired about the plan to communicate the new Code and its implications and meaning to the community. Ms. Bovard explained the District has invited students to help write a Plain Language Summary so that the Code will be understood by students. At the secondary level, the Code will be discussed at an upcoming faculty conference day and staff will be provided with training. At the elementary level, faculty has been receiving ongoing training on restorative practices embedded in the Sanford Harmony social emotional learning program. Ms. Bovard also noted additional conversations will be held with parents.

Audience to the Public – Code of Character, Conduct and Support

- A resident commended the work related to restorative practices and suggested videos to further engage staff, parents and students.

The Code will be posted on the District website, and the Board will have the opportunity to vote on the Code in November.

The Board then approved the minutes from the September 16, 2019 and September 20, 2019 meetings. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and approved.

The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items:

- Mr. David Steinberg, Syosset High School assistant principal, introduced Student Government Senate Secretary Abby Blick, who provided a report on the many activities at the high school that have taken place to kick off the school year, including: freshman elections, the blood drive, the new advisory program pilot program, a new event named Student Voice where all students can openly discuss issues pertaining to the school, the Technology Committee, the No Place for Hate Committee, the carnival taking place the weekend of October 18th (which will be taking place behind the high school in the faculty parking lot due to the construction), the new courtyard to be constructed behind the new vestibule, and the sophomore and junior trip to Boston to tour multiple college campuses.
- Syosset High School Principal Dr. Giovanni Durante congratulated the 30 National Merit Scholarship Commended Students, who are among 34,000 of the high scorers on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. They represent the top 5 percent of more than 1.5 million students who entered the 2020 NMSC competition. Congratulations to Nikhil Bhatia, Abigail Blick, Christine Bocamazo, Jeffrey Bolnick, Elizabeth Chang, Patrick Chen, Annabelle Cheng, Ryan Clark, Hailey Edelman, Brett Fabregas, Azim Gangat, Leyla Hagan, Andrew Heller, Sarah Hooey, Lois Hur, Ethan Kim, Jason Lan, Michelle Li, Laurence Lu, Samantha Ng, Ishaan Patel, Cody Phung, Elizabeth Ruggiero, Esha Sharma, Ryan Sung, Kai Wang, Kevin Wei, Ziqi Yuan, Andy Zhang and Lingfei Zhao.
- Dr. Rogers introduced Dr. David Balsamo, World Language Coordinator, who presented the new initiatives and curriculum updates to the Syosset World Language program, which reflect an emphasis on biliteracy (literacy in English and one other language). Dr. Balsamo outlined the robust language choices offered by Syosset, including the addition of the Chinese and Korean courses, the shift to a standards-based approach to language learning, and the expansion of the New York State Seal of Biliteracy program. Dr. Balsamo introduced high school students Alisha Saluja, Estefania Nuñez Villabos and Ruth Abraham who provided an overview of their Seal of Biliteracy projects.

Board President Tracy Frankel commended the work done with the World Language curriculum and inquired how the District measures fluency. Dr. Balsamo outlined the three levels of language proficiency (novice, intermediate and advanced) and explained the goal for a senior is to reach the advanced level, which is measured by using the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language's computerized standards-based test, the Assessment of Performance Toward Proficiency in Languages (APPL).

Dr. Rogers noted the Seal of Biliteracy program was chosen as a goal to prepare and distinguish Syosset students so that they have a competitive advantage after graduation, and Syosset is well positioned to take advantage of the program due to the high level of World Language enrollment for seniors.

- Dr. Rogers provided a report on student registration. He noted that a challenge experienced this year by the District was a surge in new student registrations just before the start of the school year, with 136 new registrations coming in after the bus routes were already finalized. Dr. Rogers noted the importance of families letting the District know about incoming kindergarteners as early as possible.
- Dr. Rogers stated District staff recently presented at two education conferences. The District was invited to present at the Teach to Lead Conference, a US Department of Education-led national

conference. The District presented on teacher leadership, strategies for internal change, and approaches to resolving conflict. The participants also worked with a former US DOE staff member on culturally responsive curriculum practices. District staff also presented at the LIASCD Conference, the largest education conference on Long Island, on the cross-cutting curriculum work done in Syosset. Despite the least desirable time slot, there was standing room only during the presentation and a tremendous amount of positive feedback from attendees.

- A report on the annual School District Audit was provided by Ms. Jill Sanders, Partner from Cullen & Danowski, which rendered what is known as an unmodified opinion on the financial statements, the highest level of assurance that that the financial statements fairly present the financial condition of the school district.
- In acknowledgement of New York State School Board Recognition Month, Syosset Council of PTAs President Ms. Allison Berch publicly thanked the nine members of the Syosset Central School District Board of Education for their hard work and dedication to the students of the Syosset community.

Board President Tracy Frankel announced that Business Item A-3 Appointment to Tenure would be taken out of order to congratulate the faculty members who have completed a probationary period of service. Ms. Julie Cardona, Ms. Megan Falck and Ms. Tina Gallagher acquired permanent tenure in the District. Board President Frankel and Dr. Rogers congratulated and thanked them for their stellar work and dedication to the Syosset students.

Audience to the public

- A resident expressed interest in and support for additional security measures including trained armed security personnel on site. He reported on a meeting he attended with the NCPD Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner and a county official and asked the Board to undertake a detailed review of the addition of armed trained security personnel.
- A resident expressed a concern regarding students who may not be capable of being impacted by restorative practices and/or lack parental support, and stated students need to be protected until the restorative practices are fully implemented. The resident also expressed support for armed guards.

Board President Tracy Frankel stated the Board has considered armed guards and has previously opened the discussion on security to the community and received a lot of feedback. The Board also received professional opinions, and all were taken into consideration when District-Wide Security Plan was put into place.

- A resident expressed a concern regarding the level of homework assignments, and stated in some cases, the amount of homework does not provide a sufficient amount of practice to master the skills learned in the classroom. The resident also stated that homework assignments requiring parental involvement are challenging for first-generation immigrant families.
- A resident expressed a concern about inconsistency of the level of homework assignments at the elementary level among the seven elementary schools and asked the District to better explain and communicate the District-wide policy. The resident also expressed some discomfort with armed guards in schools.

Dr. Rogers explained that a year ago, the Board asked the Administration to address issues related to the overlap of testing days, parent teacher conferences and homework assignments. While improvements have been implemented related to testing days and parent teacher conferences, the District is currently addressing homework assignments. A lot of research was done on homework and correlation with academic effectiveness, in particular the kinds of assignments that are most helpful, such as reading and project-based learning, and least helpful, such as drill and repeat based assignments. Although the work was focused on the secondary levels, the elementary level has been involved in the conversation and are also discussing best practices. He acknowledged that while all buildings are having the conversations, the District Central Office has an opportunity to improve communicating about that work to the community. Dr. Rogers pledged to do a better job of communicating and stated more information would be coming shortly.

- A resident inquired about the presence of CPR-certified personnel in the lunchrooms and the presence of EPI pens in the lunchrooms. The resident also stated that the developer of the townhomes to be built in Woodbury is marketing the development to young families and is claiming the property is zoned for Walt Whitman Elementary School.

Dr. Rogers stated that the District abides by the advice of the District school physician, which is that the school nurse should be the person to administer CPR. Staff members have received Heimlich Maneuver and Stop the Bleed training as well as a basic safety training overview. Dr. Rogers stated EPI Pen implementation is standardized across all buildings. The EPI Pens are located in cases wherever there are AED devices and Stop the Bleed cases. Dr. Rogers stated the District is in a good position to respond to an emergency.

Discussion Items

- **Selection of NYSSBA Annual Business Meeting Voting Delegate and Discussion of Selected NYSSBA Resolutions:**
 - Board Trustee Anna Levitan volunteered to be the voting delegate for the Board and Board President Tracy Frankel volunteered to be the alternate.
 - Board President Tracy Frankel highlighted some resolutions to be voted on at the Business Meeting, including:
 - An amendment to the proposed resolution regarding polling sites so that School Boards would have a voice equal to that of the Board of Elections in selecting polling sites in instances where there are other voting sites available.
 - A resolution that NYSSBA would support the requirement that local school districts continue to make determinations as to the substantial equivalency of education delivered in non-public schools.
 - A resolution that NYSSBA would support proposals to authorize municipalities to install speed zone cameras in speed zones.
- **Stop-arm Cameras:** Board President Tracy Frankel reported that the District received input from its legal counsel on the new legislation regarding school bus cameras, the purpose of which is to enforce the existing law prohibiting motorists from passing a school bus while it is stopped for the purpose of picking up or dropping off passengers. School Districts have the option to participate or not. Participation would require an agreement with the municipality, which pays for and owns the cameras and the footage obtained.

Dr. Rogers confirmed the District would not have to rebid the transportation contract if the cameras were to be used. He also stated that should the District choose to participate in the program, an Inter-Municipal Agreement would be required that covers privacy and disciplinary concerns, retention of the photographic evidence, ownership of cameras, buses operating for Syosset outside of District borders, etc. Dr. Rogers also noted the District's transportation provider, Huntington Coach, would have to be willing to participate in the program as well.

The Board had a discussion regarding enforcement of the law, the role of the bus driver in capturing the footage, the cost of the cameras and reimbursement process, the possibility of the transportation provider rejecting the proposal, the role of third parties, and the potential of improving safety for students taking the bus.

- **Communication through Lighted Road Signs:** As a follow-up to an earlier discussion, Dr. Rogers provided an update on the use and installation of lighted road signs to display important messaging and inform the community of upcoming events. He stated the cost of the signs would be approximately \$25 - \$50k depending on the type of sign purchased, plus the installation and electrical work. The District explored solar powered and temporary/portable signs, which may not be an appropriate solution, as well as NYS Department of Transportation regulations on lighted signs on sides of the road, which do not apply to school grounds.

The Board discussed issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to further investigate the cost; the possibility of a pilot program where a sign could be tested prior to purchase; the cost of updating the software and ongoing maintenance; and the possibility of utilizing the Syosset Library property.

After being asked if there is currently any school buildings with electrical power close to the road that would be appropriate for the location of the sign, Dr. Rogers stated there is some electrical work being done in front of the high school in preparation for the guard booth installation and there is conduit running to the vacant Woodbury school, which is close to the road.

New Business

Various resolutions were approved relating to staff appointments, transfers, reassignments, resignations, retirements, appointment to tenure, appointment to extracurricular assignments, and stipends and hourly rate activities.

The Board approved a number of resolutions related to the management of the District, including committee meeting minutes and policies, acceptance of the Independent Audit Report Year Ending June 30, 2019.

The Board approved a number of resolutions related to financial operations of the District, including authorization for contracts, awards of bids, award of Nassau County Director of School Facilities Purchasing Consortium Cooperative Bids, authorization for piggybacking, the disposal of obsolete equipment and books and the acceptance of donations.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, November 18, 2019 at South Woods Middle School, beginning at 8 p.m.