

# Oyster River Cooperative School Board

## Regular Meeting Minutes

February 21, 2024

DRAFT

**SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT:** Denise Day, Brian Cisneros, Dan Klein, Heather Smith, Matt Bacon, Tom Newkirk, Giana Gelsey

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:**

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:** Suzanne Filippone, Amy Ransom, Rachael Blansett, Rebecca Noe, Shannon Caron

**STAFF PRESENT:**

**GUEST PRESENT:** Sean McKinley

**ABSENT:** Dr. Morse, Maeve Hickok (student rep.)

**o. MANIFEST REVIEW/APPROVAL AT EACH SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**

**I. CALLED TO ORDER at 6:30 PM by Chair Denise Day.**

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve the agenda, 2<sup>nd</sup> Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0.**

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.**

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve the February 7, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon.**

Heather Smith made the following revision:

On page 2, under Noe's comments change "created" to "will be creating" so it reads "...a team led by Assistant Special Education Director Nancy Michaud that will be creating more guidelines for late work and reassessment".

Giana Gelsey made the following revision:

On page 4, under Superintendent's Report change "To the kids perspective" to "From the kids' perspective...".

**Motion passed with correction 7-0.**

**Heather Smith made a motion to approve the two February 7, 2024 Non-Public Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0.**

**~~V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS~~**

**~~A. District~~**

**~~B. Board~~**

**VI. DISTRICT REPORTS**

**A. Assistant Superintendent/Curriculum & Instruction Report(s)**

Student Presentation – Safe School Conference

Counseling Director Shannon Caron introduced five of the thirty students who are representatives for the ORHS Student Mental Health Team. Siena Schaier, Eva Barth-Malone, Elise Bacon, Abby Trojan, and Paige Stehle, along with other team members, spread awareness about mental health and suicide prevention during advisory time. They present slideshows and lead discussions to teach OR students how to become aware of suicide risk factors, warning signs, and resources. They believe everyone has a responsibility in preventing suicide and by communicating with others it will help reduce the risk of suicide in a community.

The five students also attended a Safe Schools Conference with students from other schools in Southern New Hampshire and spoke about their experience. At the conference they exchanged ideas on how to improve mental

health and formed connections with like-minded peers. The high schoolers came back with several new ideas to consider at Oyster River, for example attaching a bandana or pin to a backpack to signify being a “safe space” for students. They were particularly impressed by a school’s Hope Squad, which is part of a national chapter, that hosts monthly activities and yearly events for students. They were inspired by how established and well-known the group had become to students. They gained other ideas too, such as having a room dedicated to peer counseling, using an online mental health forum for students to share stories & helpful strategies, and creating art murals to spread awareness.

Board members had the opportunity to ask questions about the conference and the student-led suicide trainings.

**~~B. Superintendent’s Report~~**

**~~C. Business Administrator~~**

**D. Student Representative Report {Maeve Hickok}** – None provided.

**~~E. Finance Committee Report~~**

**~~F. Other~~**

**VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA**

- **Nomination of Human Resources Director with a March 4, 2024, start date.**

Amy Ransom announced the candidate for nomination, Jennifer Horton, and reviewed her credentials.

**Matt Bacon made a motion to approve the Nomination of Human Resources Director, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0.**

**VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

UNH Survey Results – Sean McKinley

Sean McKinley of the UNH Survey Center presented the findings of the district’s Competency-Based Reporting Survey. A total of 867 community members consisting of students, parents, and staff from grades 6-10 completed the survey. Survey questions related to such topics as the middle to high school transition, understanding competency-based ratings, student progress, perceptions & practices related to competency-based rating, and professional development. Although there were positive responses across all questions from all the survey groups, there were a fair number of negative responses. Findings showed a few discrepancies between the students and adults. For example, most students felt the transition from middle to high school was very or somewhat easy, however, nearly half the parents from grades 9 & 10 felt the transition was difficult. And, while most students felt they understand what it means when they earn a competency-based rating and the teachers’ comments on how to improve that rating, staff members believed students had a slightly lower comprehension of the system. In terms of the “Meets” category, many parents and some students felt the “M” was too broad and provided little insight into a student’s proficiency.

Survey results also provided feedback about motivation. Many students and parents believe it is much harder for students to earn an “M” or “E” from some teachers than from other teachers, and several expressed frustrations with a perceived extreme difficulty or impossibility of earning an “E”. Only one-third of parents and less than half of staff members feel that competency-based reporting effectively increases student engagement and motivation. About four in ten students say that the opportunity to redo work motivates them all or most of the time to learn and produce better work.

Regarding student progress, four in ten parents check their student’s regular progress on PowerSchool once or twice a month and about the same number check less than once a month or never. There were a variety of reasons for not checking regular progress, including difficulty to access, satisfied with other reports, not informative or helpful, communicating directly with their child or it not being necessary since their child usually

succeeds. On the positive side, seven in ten parents understand their student's quarterly progress report very or somewhat well and feel the teacher comments related to competency-based learning were very or somewhat helpful. However, parents are divided on whether the progress report gives them a clear idea of their student's learning. On the contrary, staff feel that the progress reports provide clear student learning, including strengths and areas of improvement.

Overall, most staff members and parents agree that the competency-based rating system effectively gives students opportunities to relearn, revise, and reassess, makes learning goals clear, and provides students with meaningful feedback. However, one-third of responding students say that they dislike competency-based grading, and many parents would prefer a change to traditional grading, a transition, or combination of grading systems. Very few staff members say that they would like to change to traditional grading, but many would like to reform competency-based grades, establish a clearer definition of them, or have a transition or combination of systems in middle school.

Source: "Executive Summary." University of New Hampshire Survey Center, pages 1-2, February 2024.

Several board members commented on the importance of making a survey response that acknowledges parent concerns. Creating a committee and/or action plan to make improvements and address issues with motivation and inconsistency was also suggested. A few board members expressed wanting to break the survey down by grade level responses for any correlation between the 5/6 and 8/9 transition years. Overall, the board appreciates the time that was spent to complete the surveys and they value the opinions that were shared. The purpose was to see what is working for students, parents, and staff and the board will consider these findings as they move forward with district work.

List of Policies for First Read – Policy GBEB – Staff Conduct with Students, Policy IMC {R} Controversial Topics, Speakers and Programs, Policy GCM – Professional Staff Workload and for Deletion – Policy GCG – Job Sharing/Part Time/Substitute Professional Staff Employment.

Dan Klein stated the committee met with legal counsel regarding policy GBEB.

In Policy GBEB, fix the sentence flow so it is one continuous paragraph in item #5 at the bottom of the page.

In Policy IMC {R} change "Board" to "District" in line 4. This policy was removed from first read and will be brought back to the committee for revision.

**Dan Klein made a motion to approve Policy GBEB Staff Conduct with Students and GCM Professional Staff Workload for First Read, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0.**

Policy GCG can be deleted since the positions described do not currently exist in contracts.

**Dan Klein made a motion to delete Policy GCG – Job Sharing/Part Time/Substitute Professional Staff Employment, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0.**

### School Board Self Evaluations

Each board member provided comment. Praise was given for Denise Day's leadership as Chair, Heather Smith's organization of the Superintendent Search Committee, Brian Cisneros's central work on Budget and Finance, and Dan Klein's involvement on Policy. The board worked collaboratively, and everyone brought something positive to the board. Student presentations have been a great addition and well enjoyed by members.

The following matters were raised for future consideration:

### School-Related

The elective system pre vs post-Covid, suggestion was to include sophomores again.

Middle school Competency-Based Reporting improvement/reform and a response to the survey.

Focus on transition preparation for grades 4/5 and 8/9.

Board-Related

Evenly distribute the tasks/workload among members.  
Create board secretarial duties to not rely on administration for task assignment & follow up.  
Improve mentoring for new school board members.  
Determine communication with the new superintendent.  
Follow the chain of command.  
Re-establish board member accountability & integrity.

~~IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES~~

**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Stephanie Johnson of Lee encouraged the board to not ignore the one-third of parents who do not agree with the current preparation for middle school to high school. She doesn't agree with a system that says good enough is good enough. She urged the board to consider reform that prepares students to be successful, to do their best, and to give their best attitude & effort. She felt it is a problem if the feedback and comments are not meaningful for students and families.

**XI. CLOSING ACTIONS**

**A. Future Meeting Dates:** March 6, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall  
March 20, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM– ORMS Recital Hall  
April 3, 2024 - Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall

~~XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3 II {If Needed}~~

~~–NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A2 I {if needed}~~

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

**Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0.**

➤ **DEIJ Workshop – Rachael Blansett ~8:00-9:00 pm**

**The School Board reserves the right to take action on any item on the agenda.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Karyn Laird, Records Keeper