

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](#).

### **February 8, 2016 Board of Education Meeting**

The Audit Committee meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. After an executive session and budget information meeting, the regular public meeting was called to order and the minutes from the January 11, 2016 Board meeting were approved. The Treasurer's Report was delivered and also approved.

#### *The Superintendent's Report and Other Monthly Items*

- Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas Rogers noted that the meeting would not be broadcast over the student-manned radio station WKWZ because all afterschool student activities were cancelled for the day due to the weather. However, he said the meeting was being recorded and that the audio would be made available on the district website in the next day or two.
- Dr. Rogers acknowledged Syosset High School students Alexandra Chan, Daniel Hirsch, Rachel Kang, Joshua Katz and Benjamin Senzer for being named semifinalists in the 2016 Intel Science Talent Search. He also noted that the high school's KEN Literary and Art Magazine staff once again earned first-place recognition in the American Scholastic Press Association Contest. Both groups were originally invited to appear at the meeting but were rescheduled for a later meeting in light of the weather.
- Additionally, Dr. Rogers announced that Syosset High School is one of just 19 schools in New York State to be nominated for the National Blue Ribbon School Award this year. In congratulating Principal Dr. Giovanni Durante for this impressive achievement, he also lauded Dr. Durante for being named "Best of Long Island" in the category of Best School Principal, an award sponsored by Bethpage Federal Credit Union. *(NOTE: We were notified after the Board meeting by the Bethpage Credit Union that there was a tie in this category. Dr. Durante shares this honor with Glen Zakian, principal of Farmingdale High School. The District extends its congratulations to Mr. Zakian and the Farmingdale School District.)*
- Dr. Rogers gave individual reports on student performance in relation to accelerated science and math programs. While the data showed that passing and mastery levels remained high on science and math assessments, he noted slight dips in students achieving mastery on the Grade 4 Science assessment and proficiency on the Grade 8 Earth Science exam. He also cited a change in students achieving mastery on the new Common Core Algebra I exam, largely due to changes in the mastery level scale. Acknowledging that changes to the current science curriculum would likely be imminent to meet the impending changes in the New York State/Next Generation Science Standards, Dr. Rogers recommended a continued review and enhancement of

the grade 6 and 7 science curriculum, the proposal of a new Grade 8 General Science course to the Secondary Curriculum Council as an option for struggling learners, and a future review of the entire science curriculum should the state adopt new standards. Similarly, he recommended ongoing review and enhancement of the grade 6 and 7 math curriculum, as well as making all math options available at both middle schools for consistency. He also recommended a future review of all math sequences in light of the new Commissioner of Education's comprehensive review of Common Core standards.

- To achieve compliance with State Education Department regulations regarding the number of instructional days, Dr. Rogers acknowledged that a number of mid-year changes to the current school year calendar have been made. A memorandum detailing these changes was posted to the District's website.

#### *Audience to the Public*

- Two residents expressed their concerns over the district's accelerated science and math programs, referencing that students feel pressured to pursue advanced programs even though they may not be ready for them. Another resident urged the Board and Dr. Rogers to consider developing programs that better meet the needs of all levels of learners. Dr. Rogers reiterated that the incremental changes he is proposing should meet the needs of these students and alleviate any anxiety level that may exist, particularly related to accelerated science. One Board member shared her initial parental concerns with accelerated programs but is grateful for the more open dialogue between the community and the Board taking place.

#### *Comments from the Board*

- The Board President noted some harsh criticisms directed at the Board coming from a handful of parents in the online community, and asked the audience members to encourage others in the community to exercise civility when offering their feedback. Another Board member referenced the productive dialogue that takes place between the community and the Board at public meetings, using the discussions in the current meeting as an example.

#### *Unfinished Business*

- The Board revisited a discussion from the January meeting regarding the suggestion to open school for a regular day of instruction on the Wednesday preceding Thanksgiving. The calendar the Board adopted retained the Wednesday before Thanksgiving as a recess day. The 2016-17 calendar was approved with two dissenting votes.
- The Board provided guidance to Dr. Rogers for the composition of a High School Start Time Committee, which will be comprised of administrators,

Board members, parents, students and teachers, described as a “cross-section” of the community.

- As a follow-up to the January meeting discussion on whether to eliminate, retain or modify the current practice of Visitation Days, the Board directed Dr. Rogers to develop a plan for modifying the current structure for the Board to consider. Some members of the Board expressed significant concerns with Visitation Day as constituted, citing the effects on children, their parents, teachers and school safety; others expressed support for maintaining Visitation Day.

#### *New Business*

- Various resolutions were approved relating to appointments, district policies, purchases, transfers, reassignments, resignations, retirements, settlements and other financial operations of the district.
- During the approval of election districts and voting dates for the upcoming school district budget vote and Board election, in response to a Board member’s inquiry, Dr. Rogers noted that an electronically scanned ballot system will be utilized for the first time this year.

#### *Next Meeting*

- The next meeting of the Board of Education is Monday, March 21, 2016 at South Woods Middle School, beginning with a budget information meeting at 7:00 p.m. followed by the regular Board of Education meeting at 8:00 p.m.