

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Minutes
Regular Meeting
December 13, 2021
Report 21-77

Present: Adam Easlick, Ty Krauss, Sarah Keyes, Rick Mowen, Shelly Ochodnicky, Olga Quick, Marlene Webster
Absent: None

President Rick Mowen called the Board of Education Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Washington Campus Gymnasium, 645 Alger Street, Owosso MI 48867.

Pledge of Allegiance

Building Reports

Madalyn Hasyn began her student report by saying the secondary campus is preparing for mid-term exams. She stated that the annual canned food drive is in full swing, and donations are rolling in. For the month of December, students are participating in ‘12 Days of Christmas’, a spirit month activity where students can dress up for a theme of the day. The campus has seen participation from both students and staff. The secondary campus recently hosted several student governments from other schools to have discussion on current topics over a nice meal. Madalyn ended her student report by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas.

Dr. Tuttle congratulated Madalyn as the Argus Press Student of the Month.

Bryant Principal Mrs. Shelly Collison introduced student council advisors Ms. Karla Tuma and Ms. Maggie Keech to begin Bryant’s Celebrate Kids! Report. Because the building could not hold its usual big assembly for veterans’ day, Ms. Keech and Ms. Tuma described brainstorming with the student council to come up with an alternative. They passed out flyers school wide and students and staff could nominate a veteran to honor them. They then surprised the nominated veterans at their homes with folders of drawings and messages from students thanking the veterans for their service. The students said it was rewarding for them to see the veteran’s reactions and enjoyed giving their gifts and much as the veteran’s enjoyed receiving them.

Board Correspondence

Dr. Tuttle began by wishing the Board a happy holiday. “I want to wish you all a happy holiday. Some of the gifts you see before you are from your fellow board members. The boxes are gifts from the District as Merry Christmas to you if you celebrate Christmas. They are from our local shop The Copper Top out on M-52. Also, as you leave today there are cookie trays made by our food service department. The trays are large so they couldn’t fit on the table but please be sure to pick those up before you leave tonight.”

“I want to start this evening by thanking our Owosso Police Department. Last Thursday, after unfortunate threats and copy-cat threats were made to several districts after the tragic events at Oxford our Owosso Police Department really stepped up. They have always stepped up quite frankly. Chief Lenkart, Lieutenant Cherry, they realize that we have the most precious commodity in our school district. Speaking with other superintendents and hearing how their law enforcement responded compared to ours made me very proud. We had lots of police presence at our schools and the kids felt much safer. The police are familiar with our buildings, familiar with our staff, and they are there to calm the students and let them know they are being protected. I

want to thank the Owosso Police Department again; I cannot say enough about those individuals who spend their weekends investigating things for us.”

“I would also like to spend some time talking about the positive things happening in our district. It’s ‘Joy week’ at Bentley Bright Beginnings, there is a dress up theme each day and the classrooms have fun activities planned throughout the week in celebration of the holidays. At Bryant, the tutoring program is up and running. They have four sessions going with 30-40 students participating: Second graders working on language arts, a group of fourth graders working on language arts and two groups of fifth graders, one working on math and the other working on language arts. We are super excited to provide this additional instruction to these students. At Central they have been accepting Kindness Challenges all month. Students have been working on saying thank you in the lunchroom, writing positive notes to staff and students, taking care of their winter gear in the hallway, picking up trash on the playground and more. They are also collecting canned goods for the Owosso Cares Food Drive and working on filling their third box for Toys for Tots. This week the Kindness Elf is visiting every day. She is hiding in a different spot in the morning and then traveling to classrooms to deliver a special surprise to all students because she noticed their great character. At Emerson, last Thursday members of the Emerson council rang bells outside of Springrove from 4:00-6:00pm for the Salvation Army. It was pure joy watching the kids get excited about raising money to help those in need and many cars stopped just to donate when they saw our kids singing, dancing, and ringing the bells! The Salvation Army emailed Mrs. Aue on Friday reporting over \$600 was collected at the store and they attributed most of that to our students. At Lincoln High School, today was ME Day (Motivation and Enrichment). Lincoln invited seven community members here today to expose our students to a variety of learning and activities. We did hair and nails, a fitness circuit, food preparation, and painting on canvas, among other things. This annual event has been appreciated by our students and staff for years. At the middle school, they have been sending positive post cards from teachers. In this environment that isn’t particularly positive, we’re trying to focus on the positives. They did the 12 days of Holiday Cheer again this year and shared it with Owosso High School students and staff as well. The Owosso Middle School staff contributed towards 15 turkey dinners for those in need this season. Their Peer-to-Peer program did a cookie decorating activity this week. They had SAT Shirts made for all students who took the SAT. At the Central Office it has been a standing tradition for the staff to “adopt” either an OPS student’s family or individual Lincoln students at Christmas time. The Lincoln staff identified that the Lincoln students needed a snack cart with low sugar snacks to tide students over if they missed breakfast or need a little something to get them through to lunch. Central Office has adopted the snack cart for the remainder of the school year to meet this need. Lastly, in our Transportation Department, our bus monitor decided she enjoyed being on the bus and the kids so much she has gotten her CDL license endorsements and will be moving on to the next steps to become a bus driver. And regarding the Flint Metro League, student governments from 11 different schools and fifty-five students came together at our secondary campus to share ideas about leadership and service projects. Our very own Jessica Thompson spoke with the students about the food backpack program and the food drive. It was a wonderful event, and we were grateful to host the event at Owosso High School.”

Curriculum Director Mr. Steve Brooks began his curriculum report with an update on Professional Development. “I would like to give a quick update on our curriculum. On January 17 we have a Professional Development day. It is a full day for staff, and we have a variety of topics we will be covering such as math, reading, technology, trauma, social and emotional needs. We’ve gotten positive feedback from the staff as they can pick and choose what topics they would like to participate in. We are continuing to work on the consolidated application. That is all our professional development for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year. We have a lot of testing discussion happening for April at our secondary campus. The PSAT and

SAT, there is a lot of planning that goes into those days; coordinating sites, classrooms, proctoring, so we start planning now. I wanted to spend a little time talking about the social and emotional aspects. As a district, we continue to forward various supports and resources for our staff and students. The county curriculum is looking at pulling together a county-wide supports for social/emotional needs, not only for students but for staff as well. This includes strategies in the classroom and at home. We take that very seriously. One side note, not curriculum related, I had the opportunity to work at the secondary campus over the weekend. There was a team from Charlotte of eighth grade girls walking the halls and admiring our facilities, commenting that they would love to attend school at our campus. Another young man was in shock at our fitness facility. It was great to hear those comments from students of neighboring counties.”

Public Participation

President Mowen stated that the Board of Education is a public body and recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues. Time has been included in the meeting's agenda for public participation. Members of the audience were reminded that they should announce their name and group affiliation when applicable and to limit their participation time to three minutes or less. Comments should be directed to the Board and be relevant to the business of the Board of Education. This is not an opportunity for dialogue with the Board of Education. The rules of common courtesy should also be observed.

The following public participants addressed the Board

- Sheryl Duguid
- Jackie Burzmor
- Karen Bump
- Barb Neese
- William King

For Action

- Moved by Webster, supported by Easlick to approve the November 22, 2-21 Regular Board Meeting Minutes, current bills and financials as presented. Motion carried unanimously.
- Moved by Keyes, supported by Quick to approve new radios for each building and administrators. Dr. Tuttle stated “Thank you President Mowen, in your Board report you have something that has not appeared before you ‘For Future Action’ so it comes to you ‘For Action’ this evening. When we moved to the secondary campus, we brought our radios with us only to find that they do not span the entirety of that building. We have been researching and trying to find radios that work for that facility. We are currently using some borrowed radios from Procomm. As you know, receiving equipment is not happening quickly anymore, there is a sixteen-week leeway for these radios, and we’d like to have them sooner than that. Procomm is on the state bid list so I’m asking you tonight that the Board approve, prior going out to bid, the expenditure of up to \$150,000 so that we can move forward with the radios sooner rather than later.” Motion carried unanimously to approve new radios.
- Moved by Webster, supported by Ochodnickyy to approve the termination of the Head Start Contract. Dr. Tuttle stated “Again, this is not something you’ve seen before so I want to make sure you understand this. You as a Board approved this contract with Head Start on a yearly basis. Because Head Start is a government funded entity the supersede our district and they are requiring things of their staff that is different from what we require of our staff. It used to be that the funding for Head Start was more than the funding for the Great Start Readiness Program, and that funding is now equal. In our contract it says we can terminate within 30 days and face no monetary penalty. We would

like to do so starting today so we can retain staff that would otherwise leave due to government requirements that will begin in January. In doing so, no student's education will be lessened, nor will the funding be lessened. It is prudent that we approve this this evening otherwise we will lose staff due to the government mandates." Motion carried unanimously.

- Moved by Krauss, supported by Keyes to approve the Reaffirmation of the Emergency Operations Plan. Dr. Tuttle stated "This is the same plan the Board approves every year. The only changes have been personnel updates. For example, Mr. Bruce Holladay is now listed as the Owosso High School Principal." Motion carried unanimously.
- Moved by Quick, supported Easlick to approve the extension of the current COVID-19 protocols. Curriculum Director Mr. Brooks gave an update on data and statistics since the mask mandate went into effect on November 29. "In your folder you should have a series of graphs and a report on COVID numbers specific to each building. This is over a three-week period, the week before Thanksgiving break November 15 through November 22, and the two weeks after Thanksgiving break, November 29 through December 10 when we had the mask mandate in effect for students and staff. We've seen a significant decline in overall COVID numbers since the mask mandate was approved. The week before Thanksgiving we had twenty staff members that were out, the week of November 29 we had seven, and last week we had six staff members out. The week before Thanksgiving we had 127 students and staff positive, compared to 51 positives the week of November 29, and last week we had forty. The week prior to Thanksgiving we had 483 students in quarantine, the week of November 29 we had 132 in quarantine, and last week we had 102 in quarantine. The 132 and 102 numbers are all family related; we did not quarantine any student exposure due to the mask mandate at that time. The week before Thanksgiving we had 361 close contacts, and out of those students 23 tested positive. The week of November 29 we had 43 close contacts and last week we had 124 close contacts and we had zero students that later became positives out of those close contacts. Of those close contacts in the two weeks after break, zero of those students were quarantined due to using the masks. The week prior to Thanksgiving we tested 906 students as part of our Test to Stay program, including students and staff that requested testing. 32 of the 906 tested were positive, and that is a 3.5% positivity rate. The week of November 29 we tested 446 students and six of those tested positive, that is a 1.3% positivity rate. Last week, we tested 376 and eight of those came back positive, which is a 2.1% positivity. We are still testing for extracurriculars which is why you are seeing those numbers. I would like to take a moment to talk about Shiawassee county in general. The week before Thanksgiving, the county's positivity rate was 25.7%, reduced to 23.9%, last week was 22.8%. For the state of Michigan, the week before Thanksgiving the positivity rate was 17.6%, raised to 19.5% the following week, reduced to 18.3% this last week. My conclusion is that COVID numbers for Shiawassee County and the State of Michigan remain high but as a district we have seen a significant decrease in our numbers. We have had zero outbreaks since we returned from Thanksgiving, compared to the six outbreaks we had the week before Thanksgiving. Overall, we have had far fewer students out of school the last couple of weeks." Dr. Tuttle thanked Mr. Brooks for his presentation and stated "Based on those statistics, I would like to make the following recommendation to you. I recommend the Board approve the current COVID-19 protocols until the January 24, 2022, Board meeting at which we can review the protocols again. To reiterate, staff and students are required to wear masks while at school, on the bus, and as spectators at extracurricular events. I appreciate those in the audience who follow our protocols. Student athletes and students participating in extracurricular activities will be tested weekly therefore they will not be required to wear masks and practices and competitions, those who are not actively participating will be required to wear masks at events. All visitors to OPS buildings will be required to wear masks.

While the mask mandate is in effect, all quarantine due to close contacts will cease. There will be an option for those who want to test. The district will still notify families when their child is considered a close contact to a COVID positive person as parents should be aware of that. Close contact is considered three feet or less. The optional testing will take place at the Performing Arts Center every day from 7:00am-7:45am. This recommendation comes to you based on science and data.” Vice President Ochodnický passed around an article from the New York Post regarding the social effects of masks on children, to provide a different perspective and encouraged the Board and the public to look at the big picture. Trustee Quick asked to clarify that the article was an opinion piece, and not peer reviewed journalism, to which Vice President Ochodnický did say the article was an opinion piece. Trustee Krauss if any children had any kind of negative reaction, anger, or sadness, to which Dr. Tuttle and Mr. Brooks replied, “From the children, not that we are aware.” Trustee Keyes asked if mask breaks were still happening, to which Mr. Brooks replied that mask breaks were built in throughout the day to give students and staff a break. Secretary Webster conducted a roll-call vote. Ayes: Krauss, Keyes, Mowen, Quick, Easlick. Nays: Ochodnický. Motion carried in six-to-one roll-call vote.

- Moved by Krauss, supported by Easlick, to approve the second readings of Revised Bylaw 0100, Revised Bylaw 0167.3, Revised Policy 3120, Revised Policy 6114, Revised Policy 6152, Revised Policy 7450, Revised Policy 8310, Revised Policy 8320, Revised Policy 8330. Vice President Ochodnický raised concerns over Revised Bylaw 0167.3, saying she would like to table voting on the policy because she doesn’t know how the Board would police certain public participation and that there were options available that the Board could discuss. Trustee Quick responded that the options chosen to provide the most flexibility for the Board and public participants and that the language in the policy is clear on what would be and what would not be tolerated concerning language and behavior from public participants. Secretary Webster responded that she would like to speak on how many times a public participant can speak. “Our rule used to be no participant can speak more than once. The proposed change is ‘...no participant may speak more than once on the same topic unless all others who wish to speak on that topic have been heard. In other words, you can’t speak twice unless all others have had a chance to speak. That is more flexible and protective than our old policy. As far as the part about threats, this is very clear about what a threat is. The policy used to say ‘...frivolous, repetitive or harassing’ so this suggested change narrows it down more and says public participants cannot make ‘comments that are repetitive, obscene, or comments that constitute a true threat i.e., statements meant to frighten or intimidate one or more specified persons into believing that they will be seriously harmed by the speaker.’ I think these policy changes are more protective of the speaker.” Trustee Krauss said “I don’t think these changes infringe on the rights of any public participant. Threats are unacceptable. I think we trust President Mowen to make that decision for us when something is inappropriate. So, I move that we accept these changes.” Motion carried unanimously.

For Future Action

No ‘For Future Action’ items were presented at this meeting.

For Information

Dr. Tuttle reported the following personnel changes:

Accepted Positions

- Nathan Lepley has accepted the Custodian II position at Owosso High School.

Resignations

- Mark Smith, Bus Driver has resigned.

ESSER III Survey Results

Dr. Tuttle stated “I want us to be on the same page, so I am going to read this to you. ‘The district is eligible to receive ESSER III grant funds from the Federal government. The allowable uses for these funds are the same as the previous ESSER II funds with two distinct additional requirements: ‘20% of the allocation must be used to mitigate learning loss resulting from the pandemic. The uses of these funds for this purpose can be used to: Administer high quality assessments to determine academic needs, Implement evidence-based practices, Support student and families in distance learning, Track student attendance and engagement during remote instruction, Monitor student academic progress to identify students who need more help. Funds do not need to be used in all the above listed areas. The plan for all uses of the funds (inclusive of the 20% set-aside for Learning Loss) must be done through meaningful consultation with Stakeholders. The district has opted to meet requirement #2 by utilizing a survey sent out to stakeholders within the district and posted on the district website for the public to participate. The end date for participation in the survey is December 9th. The results of the survey will be discussed at the board meeting on December 13th for input from the Board and from the public on the results. The results of the survey and the input received will be used to formulate the plan for use of the funds. Once the plan is developed, it will again be shared with the Board and public at a board meeting.’ Before Mr. Brooks shares the results of that survey, I want to share that the number one result of what stakeholders thought the money should be used towards was our facilities, which is in line with what our intended use of the funds was. The second most voted on use was safety and security. Tonight, you approved the expenditure for the radios and there may be more ideas and remedies that we bring to you in the future to provide the safest environment for our students. Mr. Brooks, the floor is yours.” Mr. Brooks stated “We received a great response for this survey. We had 710 responses, from parents, staff, and so forth. It was open for a two-week window. There were three areas that received significantly higher votes and those areas were facilities with air quality and safety being a part of that, providing social and emotional learning, and delivering specific interventions for struggling students. Parents had the option to write under the open-ended section and there were several comments regarding homework support for students and parents, cleaning and custodial needs, smaller group interventions, online supports, wages and incentives, and emotional support for students, staff, and parents throughout the pandemic.”

Public Participation

- Sheryl Duguid
- Cindy Pettit

Board Member Comments/Updates

Trustee Krauss thanked Vice President Ochodnicky for bringing information to the Board that the Board may not have seen otherwise, stating that all information is important and pertinent to decision making. Trustee Krauss also thanked all public participants for speaking up and letting their voices be heard. He also thanked the District for the generous gifts and thanked administration and staff for all their hard work this year.

Trustee Easlick also thanked the District for the Board gifts and thanked Dr. Tuttle for sharing the good news from each of the buildings.

Trustee Quick thanked the District for the gifts and appreciated the rich discussion had by the Board this evening. She also commented that it is nice to see the Performing Arts Center in use and seeing all the students enjoying their extra curriculums.

Treasurer Keyes commented that it is nice to hear those students from other districts are enjoying our new facilities and that she takes pride in Owosso's learning environment. She also enjoyed the band concert in the Performing Arts Center. Treasurer Keyes ended her comments by saying that the Board does listen to all voices on all sides and that the Board does the best they can with the information presented to make decisions.

Secretary Webster stated that the Board and most in the room are pro local control, and that the decision made by the Board tonight regarding masks is based on facts and numbers in the school district. She stated that the Board cannot argue with the numbers presented at the meeting, and the Board decided based on that evidence. She ended her comments by thanking staff and administration for their hard work.

Vice President Ochodnický stated that she appreciates and respects hearing comments from all sides, even the comments she disagrees with. She stated she appreciates everyone's efforts and thanked a particular public participant for her comments on Lincoln High School. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

President Mowen thanked Owosso's local law enforcement for their increased presence and help the last couple of weeks. He also thanked administration and staff for their efforts during these challenging times and for making sure that our students are as safe as they can be. President Mowen also recognized the efforts of each building in creating positive and engaging activities for the students to enjoy.

Upcoming Board Meeting Dates

January 10: Board of Education Committee of the Whole Meeting, 5:30PM, Washington Campus Gymnasium

January 24: Board of Education Meeting, 5:30PM, Washington Campus Gymnasium

Adjournment

Moved by Quick, supported by Krauss to adjourn at 7:09 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Brooke Barber.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Webster
Marlene Webster, Secretary