

Our Mission

*Educating and inspiring each student
to navigate successfully
in a global community*

EAST GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Kent County, Michigan

REGULAR MEETING of the East Grand Rapids Board of Education

High School Little Auditorium
2211 Lake Dr. SE, East Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Monday, June 10, 2014

MINUTES

The **REGULAR MEETING** of the East Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education, Kent County, Michigan, was held on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, in the High School Little Auditorium, 2211 Lake Dr. SE, East Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Present: Steve Edison, Beth Milanowski, Susan Levine, Elizabeth Welch Lykins, Bob Wolford, Natalie Bernecker

Absent: Michelle Rabideau

Administration: Dr. Sara Magaña Shubel, Jeanne Glowicki, Kevin Philipps, Kathy Wisniewski, Doug Jenkins, Jenny Fee, Craig Weigel, Peter Stuursma, Lori Johnston, Caroline Breault-Cannon, Linda Kehm, Anthony Morey

Meeting Called to Order

Vice President Edison called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He thanked everyone for coming this evening and announced that President, Michelle Rabideau, is unable to attend this evening's meeting as her son is playing in the EGR quarter finals baseball game.

Acknowledgment of Guests

Member Edison welcomed Maggie Kolk, Education Advocate, ARC; and Laurie VanderPloeg, Director of Special Education at Kent ISD to this evening's meeting. Edison announced that there is a change in the schedule of agenda items for this evening's meeting to accommodate Public Comments following the Annual Report of the Special Education Program.

A special recognition was held for the 20 EGRHS choir students who performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City last evening, including a total of 250 students from around the country. Dr. Borst, EGRHS Choir Director, shared the experience and commended the students on their performance. He thanked the community and administration for their support of the arts. Member Edison congratulated the students on their performance.

Board Secretary's Report: Communications to and from the Board – Beth Milanowski

- The Board received communication from Sarah & David Kugler and Anne Risch on special education.

Approval of Sale of Bonds (Enclosure #4)

Background: At the May 2014 Board of Education meeting, the Board gave the administration authority to move forward and obtain prices for bonds to finance the first \$17.4 million of the \$30.9 million approved by the community at the May 6, 2014 bond issue election. Administration has worked with Fifth Third Securities and The PFM Group to obtain pricing to sell \$15,640,000 in bonds at a premium of \$1,813,051 to finance the \$17.4 million construction fund. The true interest cost for the bonds is 4.07%. Thrun Law will be proposing approval of a resolution to confirm the sale of the bonds at the prices described.

Recommendation: Motion to approve the resolution to sell the bonds as presented in Enclosure #4.

Max Hotchkin from Fifth Third Securities and Jeff Soles from Thrun Law Firm presented background information on the Approval of Sale of Bonds.

Member Wolford moved to approve the resolution to sell the bonds as presented in Enclosure #4. Member Welch Lykins seconded the motion. A discussion was held among the Board. Motion passed 6-0.

PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION

Annual Report of Special Education Program (Enclosure #5)

Dr. Shubel introduced Kathy Wisniewski, Director of Special Education, to present the Annual Report of Special Education. Wisniewski explained the Identification Process including the problem solving process with the Child Study or Student Assistance Teams. The Multi-Tiered System of Support/Response to Intervention (MTSS) was shared detailing information on the Four Tiers in the school-wide system for student support. Wisniewski reported on the Special Education Evaluation Process. Special Education Disabilities as outlined by federal law were presented. The eight areas of Learning Disabilities were presented and the key data measures in defining learning disabilities using a pattern of strengths and weaknesses. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) was explained. Wisniewski presented an overview of special education programs and services in EGRPS and outlined each program and service in the district.

Wisniewski introduced Caroline Breault-Cannon, Breton Downs Principal, who presented in further detail the Special Education Programs and Services at the elementary level. Breault-Cannon introduced Bill Behrendt, Middle School Assistant Principal, who outlined the middle school special education programs and services. Transition-based and Links-Connect Classes were explained, as well as Academic Support and Co-Taught classes. Behrendt introduced Jenny Fee, High School Principal, who presented on the high school programs and services. Transition-Based Classes, Links-Connect Class, and Post-Secondary Programs were explained as well as Academic Support, Co-Taught, and Co-Supported Classes. Fee provided information on the Diploma Bound Credit Requirements and Credit Requirement Exceptions. She explained the Accommodations and Modifications for diploma bound students. Fee shared the multiple methods the district uses for Special Education Communications. Fee introduced Kevin Philipps, Assistant Superintendent of Business, who explained the financial aspects of special education services. Philipps provided a historical review of the special education budget from 2009/2010 through 2013/2014 school years. He reviewed Five-Year Staffing information as well.

Wisniewski concluded the presentation by providing Caseload and Staffing Information. She thanked the audience for their attendance and interest in the special education programs and services in EGRPS.

Member Edison thanked the administration for their presentation. A discussion was held among the board including clarifying questions on programs/services and special education funding. Edison again thanked the administration for their thorough presentation and explanations.

Member Bernecker asked for clarification on the requirements for IEPs being held annually. Wisniewski explained that the district must meet the 365-day requirement, but often revisions are made in order to progress on goals and objectives for students. Bernecker also asked about Professional Development for special education teachers, how are our teachers trained to gather the necessary data. Wisniewski shared that there is an extensive list of professional development in the appendix that our special education staff is involved with, in the district, in state, and out of state.

Member Wolford asked Philipps about the funding challenges at the state level and overall funding of programs on the general education level and special education level. Philipps shared that general education programs and services have seen more budget cuts than special education programs and services. This is due to a federal requirement called Maintenance of Effort that requires spending the same or more money either in total or per student each year in special education.

Member Milanowski confirmed her understanding of revenue of \$2.3 million with special education costs at \$2.9 million, clarifying that the difference of \$600,000 is coming out of general education funds. She posed a question to Fee on accommodations for diploma bound students. Fee provided examples of accommodations as extended time, chunking an assignment, etc.

Member Edison asked where a student goes who cannot reach data points. Wisniewski shared that services are provided to receive support. The Student Assistance Team works closely with general education teachers and families, look at appropriate accommodations and how we can best meet students' needs.

Member Edison questioned if the district has any students with three of the specific disabilities listed as not currently being offered on the PowerPoint. Wisniewski shared we have had students with traumatic brain injury. If we were to have students in any of the three specific areas we would provide the services necessary. The county has a traumatic brain injury team through Kent ISD which works through hospitals and works quickly to determine what level of support is needed for that student.

ACTION ITEMS - CONSENT AGENDA

Background: In order to save time during the meeting, we are using a Consent Agenda. Items in the Consent Agenda include those that are routine or have been previously discussed by the Board of Education. Any Board Member may request to have any item removed for a separate discussion and vote.

Recommendation: Motion to approve the item in the Consent Agenda, Numbers 6-27.

Approval of Minutes of REGULAR Meeting of 05/19/2014 (Enclosure #6)

Approval of Minutes of REGULAR Meeting of 06/02/2014 – Budget Hearing (Enclosure #7)

Approval of Payment of Bills for May 2014 (Enclosure #8)

Appointment of Legal Counsel (Enclosure #9)

Authorize the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent of Business to Transfer Budget Line Funds (Enclosure #10)

Designation of Depositories (Enclosure #11)

Authorize the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Business, and Board Treasurer to Sign Checks (Enclosure #12)

Authorize the Superintendent of Schools or his/her Designee to Hire, Accept Resignations, Approve Leaves of Absence, and to Terminate Employment for Certificated Staff (Enclosure #13)

Authorize the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent of Business to Hire, Accept Resignations, Approve Leaves of Absence, and to Terminate, When Necessary, Support Personnel (Enclosure #14)

Authorize the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent of Business to Invest Funds (Enclosure #15)

Authorize the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent of Business to Transfer Funds (Enclosure #16)

Authorize District to Utilize Electronic Transactions of Funds (Enclosure #17)

Authorize the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent of Business to Transfer Funds from the General Fund to the Food Service Fund, Athletic Fund, Millage Fund, or Student Activity Fund, and to Make Fund Modifications as Necessary (Enclosure #18)

Authorizations for Signatures on Checking Accounts (Enclosure #19)

Appointment of Auditors (Enclosure #20)

Adoption of the Summer Tax Collection (Enclosure #21)

Background: The Board of Education needs to renew authorization of a summer tax collection.

Recommendation: Motion to authorize a summer tax collection as presented in Enclosure #21.

Authorization to Approve Letters of Agreement with EGREA and EGRASE (Enclosure #22)

Background: The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Business, request that they have authorization to approve Letters of Agreement with EGREA and EGRASE.

Recommendation: Motion to approve authorization for the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Business to approve Letters of Agreement with EGREA and EGRASE.

Resolution for Membership in Michigan High School Athletic Association (Enclosure #23)

Background: The Board of Education is asked to approve District Membership in the Michigan High School Athletic Association for the 2014-2015 school year.

Recommendation: Motion to approve the Resolution to voluntarily join the Michigan High School Athletic Association from August 1, 2014, through July 31, 2015.

Approval of Board of Education Memberships and Dues

Background: The Board asked to have all memberships in organizations reviewed on an annual basis.

Recommendation: Motion to renew institutional memberships and pay the dues required.

Approval for Board of Education Members to attend any or all MASB, MASA, or KIASB conferences and activities

Background: Pre-approval is needed to attend MASB, MASA and KIASB conferences, workshops, and activities.

Recommendation: Motion to approve Board of Education members' attendance at MASB, MASA, and KIASB conferences, workshops, and activities.

Official Meeting Dates for the 2014-2015 School Year (Enclosure #26)

Background: See Enclosure #26.

Recommendation: Motion to authorize Board Meetings as listed in Enclosure #26.

Periodicals for the Board of Education

Background: Last year the Board received *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Educational Leadership (ASCD)*, *American School Board Journal*, and *Education Week*. The administration would like direction as to the periodicals to be ordered for 2013-2014.

Recommendation: Board direction requested.

Member Milanowski requested to pull Consent Agenda Item #26 for a discussion on the Official Meeting Dates for the 2014-2015 School Year. Member Milanowski moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 6-25, and 27. Member Levine seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

A discussion was held among the board on Consent Agenda Item #26. Member Milanowski proposed to change the April 27 board meeting to April 20, and change the May 18 board meeting to May 11 due to the busy week of graduation activities in May. Member Wolford moved to approve the calendar of Official Meeting Dates for the 2014-2015 school year as amended by Milanowski. Member Bernecker seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

OTHER ACTION ITEMS

Approval of 2014 Millage Rates for the General Fund Budget, Debt Retirement, Sinking Fund, and Recreation Millage (Enclosure #28)
Kevin Philipps presented background information on the 2014 Millage Rates for the General Fund Budget, Debt Retirement, Sinking Fund, and Recreation Millage.

Member Milanowski moved to approve the 2014 Millage Rates as described in Enclosure #28. Member Levine seconded the motion. A discussion was held among the Board. Motion passed 6-0.

Approval of 2013-2014 Final Budget Amendments (Enclosure #29)

Background: The Finance Committee has reviewed the final amendment to the 2013-2014 General Fund, Athletic, Food Service, Sinking Fund, and Debt Retirement Budgets.

Recommendation: Motion to approve the 2013-2014 General Fund Budget Amendments as recommended by the Finance Committee.

Member Bernecker moved to approve the 2013-2014 Final Budget Amendments as recommended by the Finance Committee. Member Milanowski seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

Approval of 2014-2015 General Fund Budget (Enclosure #30a-c)

Kevin Philipps presented the 2014-2015 Proposed Budget. He reviewed the budget presented at the Budget Hearing and the overall goal in discussions at the meeting. Philipps recommended the board vote on the proposed budget today, then when the state budget is finalized return at an August board meeting for an update on state funding for the fiscal year. A discussion was held among the board.

Approval of 2014-2015 Budget for the Sinking Fund (Enclosure #30a-c)

Kevin Philipps presented the 2014-2015 Budget for the Sinking Fund. A discussion was held among the board.

Approval of 2014-2015 Budget for Debt Retirement (Enclosure #30a-c)

Kevin Philipps presented the 2014-2015 Budget for Debt Retirement.

Member Levine moved to approve the 2014-2015 General Fund Budget, Sinking Fund Budget, and Debt Retirement Budget as presented in Enclosure #30a-c. Member Milanowski seconded the motion. A discussion was held among the Board. Motion passed 6-0.

Member Levine thanked the community, parents, students, all district staff, and a special thanks to the EGRNOW! committee and contributors for their support of our schools.

Approval of State Aid Loan Resolution (Enclosure #31)

Kevin Philipps presented details of the State Aid Loan Resolution.

Member Wolford moved to approve the State Aid Loan Resolution as presented in Enclosure #31. Member Welch Lykins seconded the motion. A discussion was held among the Board. Motion passed 6-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Member Edison explained the ground rules for Public Comments, sharing that there will be no time limit at this evening's meeting for public comments. He explained that the board and administration will listen to the comments but no dialogue or questions will be asked of either the person making the comment or of the board or administration. Names and addresses are requested of persons making public comments for public record but this is not mandated. Edison reported that the administration will provide a formal

response to all public comments, questions, or issues that are raised at tonight's meeting, and the response will be completed by June 30 and will be posted on the district webpage.

Member Welch Lykins commented that she has personally met with some of the special education parents and shared that the board recognizes that there are concerns. This is a unique community in that our district size allows us to hold this type of meeting. She reiterated that the board is not here to provide feedback at tonight's meeting; however, the board is hopeful that we can move forward.

Suzanne Wilcox - 415 Plymouth, wished to share her personal comments and asked for an opportunity to share closing comments on behalf of special education parents. Suzanne commented on the following special education concerns:

- Lack of intense curriculum and programming
- Lack of training
- Poor allocation of resources
- Current transition programs
- Lack of depth after 12th grade
- Teachers are doing best to develop social skills but parents do not see benefit of not learning different job skills.
- There are no evidence-based programs with proven outcomes for both transition programs for special education students in East.
- There has not been a committed look at other programs that exist around the state and a resource right here in area at Grand Valley with START program is BYF program, Build Your Future.
- Need the intensity, proven outcomes and success because this is their last opportunity to move forward and live independent lives.
- Concern as a district is that do we have the number of students to look into a program like that.

Julie and Mike Daly - 3111 Bonnell, commented on special education concerns:

- Teachers tried to help student while in middle school but have not seen the same level of commitment with administration.
- Student left school without supervision and teacher knowledge. No procedure in place by district at that time, put one in place, and followed procedure second time.
- Disappointed in lack of formal transition in East as in other schools in the county.

Jennifer Gehl - 503 Cambridge, commented on special education concerns:

- Occupational therapy has been changed to consultative model.
- Challenges with making sure goals are measurable and written in IEP.
- Wondering if special education funds are used for gifted and talented students as well as students working below the norms.
- Calendar year is approved by teacher contract but extended school year calendar seems to be unannounced until after parents have made plans for summer.

Sarah Pelligrini - 2544 Richards Dr SE., commented on special education concerns:

- Student is receiving some special education accommodations but not receiving all the help he could.
- Evaluations are not being considered.
- Believes Orton-Gillingham program should be available to all students at risk in general education and special education.

Randy Russo - 1933 Lake Drive, commented on special education concerns:

- Removed student from EGRPS after two years in East.
- Started schooling at Steppingstone Montessori then transitioned to middle school.
- Did not feel had core group of teachers who understood and could implement student into classrooms. Private school has adaptive work and student has flourished with Orton-Gillingham.
- Left district partly because EGRPS does not have measures and goals at the end of each year. IEP is so different with different diagnoses, was not valuable. Uniqueness could be changed in regard to different diagnoses and having outcome measures to what goals are.
- No services with normal developing general education classrooms with other students.
- Would take a miracle to bring student back to EGRPS based on what we have heard from high school parents.

Tina Brooks – 145 Morningside Dr., commented on special education concerns:

- Transparency is biggest problem, where to go, what to do.
- If more transparency, would not have an advocate on payroll full time.
- Lack of transparency creates lack of trust and support.
- Questions get evasive answers, not direct.
- Feel like there is a gatekeeper and you don't get the key unless you pound on the door with an advocate.

Greg and Michelle Patterson – 2046 Tenway, commented on special education concerns:

- Elementary level appears to be one of do the minimum required in special education.
- Current special education program currently has a poor reputation in the state.
- Our perception that leadership would prefer not to hear our voices and rather spend time and resources on more visible and loftier programs.
- Appears that decision has been made to exclude or severely limit PASE reps from collaborative process we all want.
- Son had phenomenal year at the middle school while struggles were present at elementary. Believes primary reason for success in middle school is building leadership.
- Special education faculty in the trenches in elementary school were extremely caring, loving, knowledgeable, and highly capable but handcuffed.
- Three changes of principals at Breton Downs, each time denied service, so appears it comes from leadership. Lack of trust. Need board to help mend gap between leadership and parents.

Sally Scripps - 1601 Alexander St., commented on special education concerns:

- Did not feel had support from special education teacher she needed.
- My experience with services from special education from the district has been one of compliance, tech compliance, but sometimes need to push, and has fostered mistrust.
- Had excellent teachers and support staff, passionate, formed some incredible relationships, but inconsistency in view across all staff has left kids feeling like they are different, dumb, and it's their fault. Fosters low self-esteem and anxiety that kids have experienced.
- Student thrived in math program at middle school, failed high school Algebra I, left with credit recovery for summer, no instructor/online learning as the only option. Model put in place at middle school was not carried on to high school.
- Professional development with special education staff and general education teachers about all disabilities, but reinforcing. Taking an online class or sitting through training does not always translate to internalizing it and modeling those behaviors.
- Wants an onsite counselor for all students who struggle with emotional disorders, recognize warning signs.
- Would like to visit the option for 80% curriculum change for credit recovery. EGRPS is the only school in the county that requires 100% of content. Need to revisit the issue to help diploma bound students be successful.

Tomesz and Ewa Timek – 909 Plymouth Rd, commented on special education concerns:

- Want great things for our kids, all kids.
- Should have same measuring stick for general education and special education.
- Comparing special education outcomes to the bare minimum that is set by the county is not what we do for general education students. Standards for special education should be high; kids are falling behind; see the data.

Bob Blanchard - 750 San Jose, commented on special education concerns:

- Personal belief that our common denominator is the kids.
- Some parents left or are afraid to attend this evening.
- Important that administration and the board understand that we are not an entity, no name, no website. Don't paint with one brush. Telling stories to learn history, make a difference, broaden perspective.
- Problems need to be resolved together, looking for solutions. Identify issues, understand.

Jodi Blanchard - 750 San Jose, commented on special education concerns:

- Was asked to be the PASE representative and resigned after two terms. Felt her voice was not heard.
- Jodi read excerpts from her letter sent to the board.
- Questioned how can things be so different from building to building. Middle school was a positive experience.
- Student entered middle school never learning concepts because of being pulled out in elementary.
- Teacher helped student with math at middle school. At middle school IEP, parents were asked to consider taking student off diploma bound track in 6th grade. At IEP in spring of 7th grade, parents met with the ISD and learned that diploma bound should not be referenced. 8th grade was a highlight with the math teacher. Math takes longer for students who struggle. Middle school principal gave student "Day of Caring" award. Appropriate staff is in trenches daily, not setting limitations but can reach potential.
- Hired advocate in 9th grade. Were assured a place for student.
- Math continued to be a major challenge. Students' efforts were never applauded.
- When met with administration received no empathy or options. E2020 since past November with no support.
- Staff is overworked, does not have quality.

Heather Missad – EGR parent, commented on special education concerns:

- Managed to keep student mainstream.
- Doing best possible educationally with parameters.
- Sensory processing will be an exponential problem in the future.

Heather - 1101 Gladstone, commented on special education concerns:

- Represents families who chose private schools.
- EGRPS is not serving special education children.
- Denied evaluation.
- Diagnosed ASD, inclusion special education at private school.
- Have a very high functioning daughter but cannot send her to EGRPS when special education child cannot be serviced.
- Opportunities lost in EGRPS for financial support when families do not send children to EGR schools.

Wendy Kettler – 1609 Franklin, commented on special education concerns:

- Chose EGR for best education for all children.
- If student struggling is a problem.
- Took five years to get IEP for student; student fell behind and failed math.
- Last three years have been great, hopeful for high school.
- Twins in 1st grade. Took attorney to show up at IEP last time to get services.
- All difficult issues but in general not receiving excellence.

Dick Gauthier – 2863 Reeds Lake Blvd., commented on special education concerns:

- Student will be a senior and loves school because of the love she received all through school; very appreciate of the love she feels.
- Love of high expectations is not given at school. If gave up on neuro typical students, would be a scandal.
- Students are not skulls full of mush, can do and learn, but not being challenged at EGRPS.
- Asking for higher challenges for kids.

Suzanne Wilcox – extended tremendous thanks to the board for listening. Thanked parents for coming to an awareness of letting administration hear concerns. Some parents fear speaking up. General concerns cannot correct problem until recognize it exists. Proposed a solution for consideration: Create two special education task forces, elementary and secondary.

- Key Stakeholders to participate to include general education teachers, Intervention Specialist, psychologist, parents, Special Education Director.
- Individual party to oversee process - look at depth and breadth and compare
- Ask for Task Force to look at RTI process from K-12
- Look at are we doing the best, providing professional development for teachers to be effective in class
- Engage 1:1 – look at best use of technology for all students
- Best way to flush out issues and identify strengths. Sense of urgency, would like to work together in a timely fashion. We are willing to work collaboratively.

Vice President Edison thanked everyone and commended parents for a smooth process.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Edison adjourned the meeting at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Milanowski, Secretary
East Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education

- * Minutes for this meeting will be available in the Superintendent's Office at 2915 Hall St. SE, East Grand Rapids, MI 49506. The phone number is 235-3535.
- ** If you plan to attend and have a special need and require accommodation to attend this meeting, please contact Dr. Sara M. Shubel, Superintendent, at 235-3535.