

Synopsis of Westfield Board of Education Meeting on May 21, 2019 By Superintendent Margaret Dolan



Board President Peggy Oster opened the meeting with recognition of our high school and intermediate school student musicians selected to perform in state and regional vocal and instrumental ensembles in the 2018-2019 school year. Mrs. Oster said that each was chosen after rigorous auditions, often competing against hundreds -- in some cases, more than 1,000 -- of other student musicians from the region or across the state. "The amount of time and effort these students put into perfecting their musical proficiency is amazing," Mrs. Oster said. "It is no wonder they are here today for this recognition."



STANDARDS-BASED REPORT CARD

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Programs Paul Pineiro gave [a presentation](#) on the Standards-Based Report Card for grades K-5, which elementary schools will begin using in September. Mr. Pineiro stated the revised report card will allow classroom teachers to better identify student strengths and areas for growth in a standards-based learning environment that fosters a more informed approach to individual student instruction.

Mr. Pineiro showed [a video](#) that explains the reasons for the revised report card, how it is different, and why it will provide clearer goals for learning, more effective instruction, more detailed information, and a growth mindset to help foster in students the belief that ability and competence come from effort, not a fixed level of intelligence.

Mr. Pineiro also reported that, similar to existing practice, students will receive feedback on various social and emotional learning behaviors.

Tamaques third grade teacher Cathy Chao told Board members that she is excited by the standards-based report card which she said will make "more reflective learners" of her

students. For parents, she said, the revised report card is “more transparent” and will provide a clearer picture of the learning taking place in the classroom.

Mr. Pineiro, Ms. Chao, and Franklin Assistant Principal Dr. Paul Duncan -- who are members of a committee of administrators, teachers and other stakeholders that spent two years revising the report card -- answered questions from Board members.

Mr. Pineiro reported that he and Dr. Duncan have been speaking at elementary PTO meetings and that the response to the standards-based report card has been positive. Mrs. Oster thanked Mr. Pineiro and his team and encouraged them to continue their efforts to keep parents informed of the revised report card in the fall.

2018-2019 DISTRICT GOALS

I provided an update on the 2018-2019 District Goals, highlighting a number of ways that the district has been successful this year in meeting the three goals. From Growth Mindset bulletin boards in elementary hallways to many classrooms where teachers weave the language of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into academic lessons, we have made great strides, as stated in District Goal 1, in assessing current practices promoting SEL and expanding its consistency districtwide. I pointed to the district website which contains many useful SEL resources, including a series of TED-Style Talks by some of our administrators who help to explain the five SEL competencies. I also noted that a state official visited Westfield High School in January to receive a briefing on the ways SEL is incorporated throughout the district.

For District Goal 2 to “establish a system to ensure the new website is routinely updated and maintains a consistent look and ease of navigation,” I demonstrated how the homepages for the district and each of the ten schools share the same format, with easy to navigate dropdown menus that contain important information. I noted that the search button is an invaluable tool and that parents routinely comment on the quality of the photographs and what they have learned about the district just by looking at the pictures.

Lastly, since we first unveiled an online alumni database for engagement and outreach in September, as stated in District Goal 3, more than 775 Westfield High School graduates have registered to receive the Blue Devil Bulletin, our new quarterly alumni newsletter. Initial registration response was slow, but once the inaugural issue of the newsletter went out in January, registrations soared. Our newsletter readers are enjoying short alumni profiles, news about upcoming reunions and other events, photographs from yearbooks past, and much more. We’ve also added a “Connections” section to help the newly graduated connect with more seasoned alum who may have internship and/or job opportunities.

PERSONNEL

The Board accepted the retirement of substitutes Jane Fitter-Schoenfeld as of March 1, 2019 and Howard Grobstein, effective December 31, 2018. We count on our substitutes and appreciate their work.

FACILITIES

Business Administrator Dana Sullivan reported that the Kehler Stadium renovation project continues on schedule and that recent rainfalls did not affect construction. Mrs. Sullivan noted that all other facilities projects for Summer 2019 also are on target.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Long Range Planning Committee Chair Amy Root stated that the Board plans to hold a workshop in June to talk about the issue of full-day kindergarten and that Board members and administrators have held recent conversations with town and state officials on the topic.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND PROGRAMS

The Board approved district field trips as correlated with curriculum.

The Board approved student teacher James Sheerin for the 2019-2020 school year.

FINANCE

The Board accepted with gratitude the following donations:

- A gift of \$10,000 from the Westfield Education Fund to fund upgrades to an Edison Intermediate School classroom to create an innovative classroom.
- A gift of \$10,000 from the Westfield Education Fund to fund upgrades to a Roosevelt Intermediate School classroom to create an innovative classroom.
- A gift of \$1,000 from the Westfield Education Fund to Project 79 in honor of Dr. Nelson.
- A grant from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund to McKinley School in the amount of \$250 towards gardening equipment and materials through the Kids Dig In! Grant program.
- A grant from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund to Tamaques School in the amount of \$250 towards gardening equipment and materials through the Kids Dig In! Grant program. Tamaques also received \$100 from the Rake & Hoe Club towards garden supplies, lessons and tastings.
- A grant from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund to Jefferson School of garden materials (two raised bed gardens, soil and labor) valued at approximately \$250 through the Kids Dig In! Grant program.
- A gift of \$56,878.38 from the Franklin School PTO for the purchase and installation of additional equipment for the Franklin School playground.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology Committee Chair Michael Bielen reported that the committee will meet on June 7 to review a policy regarding Board member use of social media.

NEW BUSINESS

Board Member Brendan Galligan stated that he continues work on a resolution that would recommend to the U.S. Department of Defense that Dr. Derrick Nelson be posthumously awarded the Soldier's Medal. The Soldier's Medal is the highest peacetime award for valor given to a member of the U.S. Army, including the Army Reserve in which Dr. Nelson served for more than 20 years, for a heroic act in a non-combat situation.

LIAISON REPORTS

Mrs. Root noted that the Franklin School PTO has been diligent in reviewing playground designs and looks forward to moving ahead with the project.

Board member Tara Oporto noted that the Lincoln School Spring Scholastic Book Fair will be held on May 29-31, 2019 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HIGH SCHOOL

Westfield High School senior Austin Chen has been named a 2019 National Merit Scholarship winner. Austin was among 2,500 students from a pool of approximately 15,000 finalists across the United States to receive a national achievement scholarship of \$2,500. Congratulations to Austin on this prestigious accomplishment.

Congratulations to the following Westfield High School students who achieved a top score of 36 on portions of the April 2019 ACT standardized tests:

Grade 11

- Kathryn Bartlett - Reading
- Eric Elizes - Math, Science, and STEM
- Madeline Katz - English and Reading
- Spencer Rothfleish - English
- Justin Sawina - Reading
- Elijah Soh - English

Grade 10

- Kyle Azzaretto - Reading

206 juniors and 12 seniors from Westfield High School were inducted into the National Honor Society on May 9 in recognition of academic excellence, leadership, service and character. A video of the National Honor Society induction ceremony is posted on the Blue Devil Television section of the Westfield High School homepage. Congratulations to all and a special thanks to National Honor Society advisor Scott Rutherford.

Westfield High School senior Jaimie DeDea was named "Union County Municipal Alliance Volunteer of the Year" at the Local Advisory Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (LACADA) annual volunteer recognition dinner in Union on May 7. DeDea is president of the WHS Dream Team which promotes positive decision-making and healthy choices through programs that provide alternatives to underage drinking and drug use. The LACADA Volunteer of the Year is recognized for exemplary service to the New Jersey Alliance to Prevent Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Program, the largest network of community-based anti-drug coalitions in the nation.

Congratulations to Shirzad Mustafa, winner of the Westfield Historic Preservation Commission's student art & writing contest. Shirzad is a 9th-grade student at Westfield High School. He will receive the award for his poem, "Walk Down Boulevard," at the HPC's Devlin Awards ceremony on Thursday, June 6, at 7:30 pm in the Community Room of Town Hall.

There is lots of good news from the Westfield High School Theatre Department. The fall production of "Rosencranz & Guildenstern are Dead" received a Montclair State University "Foxy Award" for "Outstanding Achievement by an Acting Ensemble of a Comedy."

The spring production of "Sweet Charity" has received seven Paper Mill Playhouse "Rising Star Award" nominations and Honorable Mentions. The winners will be announced at a ceremony at the Paper Mill on Tuesday, June 4.

And, at the Bucks Country Student Theatre Festival in April, the one act “Top Girls” was recognized as the “Outstanding Student-Directed Production”. The cast of “Top Girls” included Talia McRoberts, Julia Salvato, and Remi Shendell. Julia Salvato was also recognized for “Outstanding Performance by an Actress in a Featured Role” for her performance.

Congratulations to all of the nominees and winners and to Westfield High School theater director Daniel Devlin.

INTERMEDIATE

Edison Intermediate School 7th graders Sofia Gil and Hannah Hollosi have been named finalists in the 2019 ProjectCSGIRLS Competition for middle school girls. ProjectCSGIRLS is a nonprofit organization that believes that “nurturing an interest in science, math, and technology during the critical middle school period will help them to better see themselves as the future leaders of tomorrow.” The girls will attend a National Gala in the Washington, D.C. area in early June, which will feature guest speakers, hands-on workshops, technology talks and a formal awards ceremony at which the winners will be announced.

COMMUNITY

The deadline for Westfield residents interested in considering a term on the Board of Education is Monday, July 29 at 4 p.m. when nominating petitions are due at the County Clerk’s office in Elizabeth. The Westfield Board of Education will have five open seats in November. The three board members whose three-year terms are expiring are Michael Bielen, Brendan Galligan, and Amy Root. Additionally, there will be a two-year term and a one-year term, which represent the remainder of the unexpired terms of Charles Ostroff and Lynn Benner, who resigned in January 2019. Robert Garrison and Brian Morrissey were board-appointed in February to fill those seats through December; they will be required to run again, if interested. More information on the board election process can be found under the Board section of the district website.

SCHOOLS CLOSED MAY 24 AND MAY 27

Westfield Public Schools and offices will be closed on Friday, May 24 for the unused snow day and on Monday, May 27 to observe Memorial Day. Please remember that the town’s parade -- in which many of our students will participate -- begins at 9:00 a.m. This year’s Grand Marshal title has been awarded posthumously to Dr. Derrick Nelson.

NEXT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

The next meeting of the Westfield Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, June 11 at 7:00 p.m. at 302 Elm Street. It will be the reorganization meeting of the Board. Please note the change of the starting time from 7:30 to 7 p.m. as we also honor the intermediate and high school teachers and staff of the year. A complete agenda of the meeting will be available on Friday, June 7 on the Board section of the district website.

I wish everyone a safe and enjoyable Memorial Day weekend.

Margaret Dolan, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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