

**Synopsis of
Westfield Board of Education Meeting on October 15, 2019
By Superintendent Margaret Dolan**

Before turning to the regular business of the Board, Business Administrator Dana Sullivan announced that she was made aware of a false claim by a company that contacted a local dentist, stating it was working with one of our elementary schools on a “safety program” and requesting information. Mrs. Sullivan reiterated that the district does not use third-party companies to run such programs and that she plans to notify local law enforcement. She urged any resident who is contacted by a third-party company claiming to be working with the school district to contact her office.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Report on Testing

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Programs Paul Pineiro presented a report on the [2019 Testing Results](#) for Westfield Public Schools:

- New Jersey’s statewide assessment program includes the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA), ACCESS for English Language Learners (ELL), and Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) for students with the “most significant intellectual disabilities.”
- In 2019, NJSLA results in English Language Arts and Mathematics for all students far exceeded New Jersey comparisons across all grade levels. Students in identified subgroup populations also exceeded state expectations at most grade levels.
- The data provided by these assessments is useful for comparative analysis in determining areas of improvement.
- District supervisors analyze data and provide targeted professional development for teachers to illustrate areas of strength and emphasize areas for growth.
- ACCESS is an annual, federally-mandated assessment to monitor and report progress toward English language proficiency. It tests English Language Development Standards in four domains: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.
- Of the 43 ELL students who took the ACCESS assessment, 13 received a passing score of 4.5 or higher. Eight additional ELL students were exited from the program in June 2019 for strong performance in other metrics.
- Progress in English language acquisition by our ELLs varies widely, depending on what age they enter the program, whether English is spoken at home, and other variables.
- The DLM assessment tests New Jersey State Learning Standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and is offered to students with the “most significant intellectual disabilities” as an alternate assessment to the NJSLA.
- Testing dates for next spring’s state assessments can be found on the [Curriculum Department page](#) on the district website, along with New Jersey Department of Education graduation requirements and parent resources.

Week of Respect

October 7-11 was observed as the Week of Respect in public schools throughout New Jersey. In Westfield, we call it the [Week of “Extra” Respect](#) because respect for self, respect for others, and respect for the community is an ideal reinforced in our district throughout the school year. Special activities took place during the week including a continued focus on the *Six Pillars of Character*, lessons and stories on inclusiveness and promoting tolerance, kindness motivational videos and songs, a review of the Code of Conduct at each of our schools, and

themed clothing days, including “Mismatched Clothing” day to emphasize respect for differences. Children learn respectful behaviors by watching adults; it is important that we all show respect in our interactions with others, especially when we disagree.

PERSONNEL

The Board unanimously approved the appointment of Sean McArthur as Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, effective January 1, 2020. Mr. McArthur will succeed Michael Morris who has served the district for the past 25 years and will retire as of December 31, 2019. This is one of the most important jobs in the district as the supervisor is responsible for maintaining our buildings -- many of which are aged -- as well as acres of school grounds. Mr. McArthur currently serves as Facilities Manager in Lacey Township Public Schools. Mrs. Sullivan noted Mr. McArthur’s important certifications and extensive experience in landscaping, facilities management, and maintenance. “We are enthusiastically looking forward to Sean joining the Westfield family,” said Mrs. Sullivan.

Mr. McArthur thanked the Board and administration for “the opportunity to come into a wonderful school district,” adding that he understands and takes very seriously the importance of the position. Board President Peggy Oster welcomed Mr. McArthur, stating that we all look forward to his arrival in January.

FACILITIES

Committee Chair Gretchan Ohlig provided an update on previous discussions regarding security vestibules and visitor management systems. Ms. Ohlig stated that, based on an architectural review, the estimated cost of installing vestibules at each of our ten schools would be just under \$5-million as the work is quite extensive in some buildings, with that estimate expected to rise given that the work would not be done until the summer of 2020 or 2021. She noted that the committee’s primary question focused on whether the creation of vestibules would offer a meaningful additional layer of security that would be the best use of district and taxpayer resources. The committee asked Mrs. Sullivan and myself to review this question with the district’s security consultants and with the New Jersey Department of Education’s Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning. Ms. Ohlig reported that, given the district’s new policy of not allowing visitors into a school without an appointment, the experts confirmed that the new system in place in the district was just as effective in keeping individuals outside of the building. Ms. Ohlig added that the Facilities Committee asked the Long Range Planning Committee to further review and discuss the issue, which concurred with the Facilities Committee conclusion that, because the vestibules do not offer an additional layer of security not already taken into account by the district’s new policy on visitors to our schools, installing vestibules is not a thoughtful and responsible use of district resources at this time.

Ms. Ohlig also reported that the committee heard from Mrs. Sullivan and myself on a series of meetings we held with vendors who offer identification management systems. She noted our findings that these systems currently provide information only on whether a potential visitor is on the sex offender registry, information we already receive from law enforcement. Additionally, Ms. Ohlig reported that none of the vendors currently offer an identification system that could be used reliably outdoors to prevent visitors having to enter the building to have their ID swiped. For those reasons, Ms. Ohlig stated that the committee did not believe the systems currently offer any additional security measures. She added that the committee will continue to monitor advances in this technology and reassess the value of such a system should it provide more useful information along with outside installation.

Board members contributed to the conversation, noting that suggested vestibules would cover 10 out of 126 doors districtwide.

Mrs. Oster noted that the new security protocols have resulted in a decrease flow of visitors, which she recently witnessed when signing in at one school. I confirmed that secretaries are getting fewer interruptions and that we continue to monitor how the new protocols are working in this early stage. We continue to solicit feedback from parents and greatly appreciate their cooperation. With the play and concert season nearly upon us, I've been working with the Department of Visual and Performing Arts to strike a balance in terms of security. We continue to work with community groups who use our buildings as well. We're definitely not done; we're still listening to suggestions and observations and will continue to learn.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Committee Chair Amy Root reported that full day kindergarten will be discussed at the committee's next meeting and that she hopes to be able to provide an update at the October 29 board meeting.

POLICIES

The Board approved for first reading the following policies:

- 1240 Evaluation of Superintendent (Administration)
- 3159 Teaching Staff Member/School District Reporting Responsibilities (Teaching Staff Members)
- 3218 Use, Possession, Distribution of Substances (Teaching Staff Members)
- 4218 Use, Possession, Distribution of Substances (Support Staff)
- 6112 Reimbursement of Federal and Other Grant Expenditures (Finances)
- 7440 School District Security (Property)
- 8600 Pupil Transportation (Operations)
- 8630 Bus Driver/Bus Aide Responsibility(Operations)
- 8670 Transportation of Special Needs Pupils (Operations)

Committee Chair Brendan Galligan noted that Policy 7440, which states that "propping open doors to buildings on school grounds is strictly prohibited and students and staff shall not open a door for any individual" and that "all persons seeking entry into the main building shall be directed to the main entrance" is aligned with recent revisions to State law. Mr. Galligan pointed to updated requirements regarding bus safety in Policy 8630 and to a minor revision to Policy 7510 (in Notes for the Record) reclassifying the Town of Westfield as a Group I user of school facilities and waiving school auditorium rental fees for certain Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) fundraising performances.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND PROGRAMS

The Board approved district field trips as correlated with curriculum. The Board also approved a Westfield High School summer Geometry class for those students qualifying for the opportunity to accelerate into Algebra II, along with voluntary Student Teacher/Intern candidates for the 2019-2020 school year.

Committee Chair Amy Root noted that the summer Geometry class was discussed with Supervisor of K-12 Mathematics Elizabeth Delasandro at the committee's last meeting and would be offered to students meeting certain requirements during the summer between freshman and sophomore year.

FINANCE

The Board accepted with gratitude the following donations:

- Gifts from the Westfield Coalition for the Arts to be used as follows:
 - \$1,670.24 to purchase instrumental music folders for Westfield High School concert band students.
 - \$2,070.00 Travel expenses for the Concert Choir's rehearsals and performance in New York City in April 2020.
- A gift of \$1,114.34 from Governor Livingston High School in honor of Dr. Derrick Nelson. The funds will be used by Westfield High School to support any school and community initiatives that embrace the ideals of Dr. Nelson.
- A gift of \$1,200 from the Westfield Rotary Club Foundation to be used to add more items to the learning garden at Jefferson School.
- A gift of \$1,887.90 from the Westfield Choral Parents Association to purchase six handheld wireless microphones for Westfield High School choral students.
- A gift of a \$5,000 Student Achievement Grant awarded to Megan Lynn at Roosevelt Intermediate School from the NEA Foundation to purchase kits, materials and supplies for STEAM.

Mrs. Oster expressed gratitude to all contributors, with a special thank you to Governor Livingston High School for its thoughtfulness and support of Westfield High School and the late Dr. Derrick Nelson.

TECHNOLOGY

Committee Chair Michael Bielen reported that, at a recent meeting, members heard from Chief Technology Officer Brian Auken about district summer projects, including Chromebook carts, digital electricity, and interfacing newly installed doors at the high school with technology. At its next meeting, Mr. Bielen says the committee will hear from district master technology teacher Jeanine Gottko regarding staff professional development and instructional technology.

LIAISON REPORTS

Board member Robert Garrison reported on the first meeting of the Parent Teacher Council's Special Education Committee at which Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Dr. Michael Weisman and members of his Child Study Team answered thoughtful questions from parents. Mr. Garrison called it "a tremendous night" during which Dr. Weisman and his team provided a very thorough presentation.

Mr. Galligan noted that, on September 27, he was sworn in as a member of the Board of Directors of the New Jersey School Boards Association, representing Union County for a three-year term. Mr. Galligan reported that new recommendations by the NJSBA Mental Health Task Force focus on enhancing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and mental health initiatives.

Mrs. Oster stated that SEL was the focus as well at a recent Westfield High School Parent-Teacher-Student Organization (PTSO) meeting, with two students outlining specific programs they have created to help students ease anxiety and make connections. She also reported on a meeting of the Jefferson School PTO and a recent survey conducted of Jefferson parents and teachers to match priorities. And Mrs. Oster declared the official opening of the new Jefferson Learning Garden a success.

Board Vice President Amy Root reminded the community that Franklin will hold its popular Pumpkin Fair this Saturday, October 19 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lots of activities for families. She noted her recent participation in a townwide cleanup organized by the Green Team and encouraged members of the community to visit the Town of Westfield website at westfieldnj.gov to keep apprised of upcoming Green Team events.

Mr. Bielen reported that adherence to the updated district security procedures were the topic of discussion at a recent meeting of the Edison PTSO. He also encouraged members of the community to enjoy an exhibit of original works of art by Charles Addams, alongside that of student finalists from the Charles Addams Cartoon Contest, on display at the James Ward Mansion from October 15-23 as part of the AddamsFest celebration.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Board heard from a resident who expressed appreciation for the district's tightened security measures as well as disappointment that security vestibules and an electronic visitor management system are not to be installed at this time. She stated that she understood that the cost of the vestibules might be prohibitive but wondered why the district would not want to invest in an electronic record of all visitors. I stated that these decisions are not based solely on cost but on whether they provide, as Ms. Ohlig stated, a meaningful level of added security that justifies the price tag. I reiterated Ms. Ohlig's comment that we will continue to monitor advances in technology for electronic visitor management systems. Ms. Ohlig added that the district currently maintains a digital appointment calendar of visitors along with a written log. Board members also discussed security procedures for standard delivery items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HIGH SCHOOL

For only the 2nd time in Westfield High School history, the Blue Devil Marching Band was chosen as one of ten finalists at the Bands of America Mid-Atlantic Regional, held this year at the University of Maryland on October 5. The Blue Devils finished 3rd in their class and 7th overall in the preliminary daytime contest among 26 bands from 6 states. The band finished 7th in the evening finals contest under the leadership of drum majors Theresa Lizzo, Christian Sawina, and Robert Strauss, their highest placement ever at a Bands of America event. Additionally, the Marching Blue Devils placed 1st in their class at the recent Scotch Plains Marching Band Festival while receiving the grand champion award of all bands attending the competition. Congratulations to our Marching Blue Devils and to band directors Trevor Sindorf and Christopher Vitale.

Westfield High School seniors Etan Zeller MacLean, Luke Pardo, and Sandrine Perez have been named 2019-2020 National Hispanic Scholars as part of the College Board National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP). According to the College Board, the program honors more than 7,000 academically outstanding Hispanic/Latino juniors each year who achieve a qualifying score on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test for their region and maintain a cumulative junior year grade-point average of 3.5 or higher. Congratulations to all on this prestigious recognition.

Congratulations to the following Westfield High School students who achieved perfect scores in subject areas on the August SAT:

- Mark Falletta (Math Level 2)
- Mira Mehta (Math and Evidence-Based Reading & Writing)

- Maxwell Scialabba (Math Level 2)
- Madeline Stack (Math Level 2)

Two of our Westfield High School athletic coaches recently reached career milestones. Head football coach James DeSarno reached his 100th career victory as the Blue Devils defeated Elizabeth 34-6 on October 4. And head volleyball coach Beverly Torok earned her 500th Varsity win last month, joining coaches George Kapner, Bob Brewster and the late Gary Kehler in attaining this spectacular achievement. Congratulations to Coaches Torok and DeSarno.

The Westfield High School Theater Department will present the historical drama "Radium Girls," based on the real life story of a group of female factory workers who contracted radiation poisoning from painting watch dials during World War I and who fought a race-against-time for justice. The fall production will be performed in the high school auditorium on Thursday, November 21 at 4:00 p.m. and on Friday and Saturday, November 22 and 23 at 7:30 p.m. Information on ticket sales will be available on the Westfield High School Theatre Department website in the coming weeks.

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

Save the dates for our intermediate school fall dramas. Edison Intermediate School presents the comedy whodunit, *Clue On Stage*, on Wednesday, October 30 at 4 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, November 1 and 2, at 7:00 p.m. Ticket sales for the Friday and Saturday performances begin on October 28 after school in the Edison vestibule at \$8.00 pre-sale or \$10 at the door on day of performance. General admission tickets for the special preview matinee on October 30 will be sold at the door for \$5.00. Roosevelt Intermediate School's fall production will be *The Outsiders*, a coming-of-age drama by S.E. Hinton. A preview performance will be held at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 14 followed by performances on Friday and Saturday, November 15 and 16 at 7:00 p.m. All tickets are \$10 and can be purchased online at ris.booktix.com or at the door.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Washington School has been named a National Blue Ribbon School, one of nine schools in New Jersey to be recognized in 2019. Created in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes outstanding public and non-public school achievement for overall academic excellence and/or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. On November 14 and 15, Secretary DeVos and the U.S. Department of Education will celebrate with 312 public and 50 non-public school honorees at an awards ceremony in the Washington, D.C. area. Superintendent Dr. Margaret Dolan, principal Dr. Andrew Perry, and 5th grade teacher Matthew Cognetti will attend the ceremony to accept the award. A celebration for the Washington School community will be held in December to honor all those who have contributed over the years to this important recognition.

Team McKinley recently raised nearly \$2,000 for autism research and awareness at the Autism Speaks Walk in Cranford. Special thanks to organizer/teacher Jennifer Ullrich and to all members of the McKinley school community who participated.

COMMUNITY

The Westfield High School Choir presents the [2nd Annual Guys' Night of Singing](#) on Friday, October 25 from 6-8:30 p.m. in the WHS auditorium. The event is open to any male student in

Grades 7-12 and to Westfield dads, teachers and guys of all ages who like to sing. Performance by special guests *The GrooveBarbers* begins at 8 p.m. Contact WHS Choral Director John Brzozowski at (908) 789-4500 x4549 or jbrzozowski@westfieldnj12.org if you're interested in participating or have any questions.

The next meeting of the Parent Teacher Council (PTC) will be held on Wednesday, October 30 at 10:15 a.m. in the Board meeting room at 302 Elm Street. The PTC is the umbrella organization for all ten of the Westfield school PTOs. At these monthly meetings, PTO presidents meet with the PTC board, Superintendent Dr. Margaret Dolan and a representative of the Board of Education. These are public meetings which all parents are welcome and encouraged to attend. More information on the PTC, including a meeting schedule, can be found under the [Family Resources](#) tab on the district website.

BOARD

Meet the candidates running for the Westfield Board of Education as the Parent Teacher Council (PTC) holds a Candidates Night on Wednesday, October 23 from 7:30-9:00 p.m. in the Westfield High School Auditorium. The evening will be moderated, with candidates asked a variety of questions to be gathered from the public prior to the forum. Questions may be submitted to ptc@westfieldnj12.org by October 22. More information on the forum and the candidates can be found under the [Board tab](#) on the district website.

NEXT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

The next meeting of the Westfield Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, October 29 at 7:30 p.m. at 302 Elm Street. The complete agenda will be available on Friday, October 25 on the Board section of the district website.

Margaret Dolan, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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