

**Synopsis of  
Westfield Board of Education Meeting and Workshop on June 11, 2019  
By Superintendent Margaret Dolan**

Board President Peggy Oster presented resolutions on behalf of the Board of Education to secondary school staff members who received awards of excellence this spring. They included Edison social studies teacher John Stasi and Roosevelt school nurse/health educator Sharon Dorry as recipients of this year's Optimist Club's Intermediate School Outstanding Teacher Award. Also acknowledged were three Westfield High School teachers and one support staff member: Aimee Burgoyne-Black, English teacher and recipient of the Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award; special education teacher Lara Rinaldi who received the WHS PTSO Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award; English/Project '79 teacher Erin McKeon, awarded the Above and Beyond Award; and Mario Arana, custodian and winner of the Robert and Linda Foose Memorial Award. On hand at the Board meeting to speak to the dedication and care shown by these professionals were Edison principal Matthew Bolton, Roosevelt principal Mary Asfendis, and WHS interim principal James DeSarno.

Business Administrator Dana Sullivan presented a \$1,000 scholarship from the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (NJASBO) to Westfield High School senior Adam Holtzman who plans to study business at the University of Wisconsin in the fall. The scholarship is part of the 2019 Distinguished Service Award bestowed on Mrs. Sullivan as one of four school business administrators in the state to be recognized this year by NJASBO. Mrs. Sullivan described Adam as "an excellent student, a community servant, and a young man with integrity and a love of learning."

### **VIOLENCE, VANDALISM, SUBSTANCE ABUSE & HIB REPORT**

In our schools we begin at a very young age to instill in our students respect for self, others and the community. The importance of fostering respect is interwoven in curriculum for all grades and within the Code of Conduct. For the adults in our community – including staff and parents – we hold appropriate trainings and workshops on topics such as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), legal updates, Board policy reviews, and responsible use of social media. Programs for students include social problem solving, character education (through assemblies and lessons), leadership programs, and programs in which our older students convey meaningful messages to our younger students.

Despite our efforts, there are occasions when conduct does not meet our expectations. The State requires school districts to report on Violence, Vandalism, and Substance Abuse and Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) twice a year. I provided an overview of the Student Safety Data System (SSDS) for the time period September 1 – December 31, 2018.

### **REORGANIZATION RESOLUTIONS**

The Board approved a long list of business items and professional services to move forward into the new school year, including existing curricula, textbooks and policies; personnel responsibilities; tax and finance schedules and institutions; legal, auditing and insurance services; state contract vendors; and cooperative educational memberships.

### **FACILITIES**

Mrs. Sullivan provided a brief recap of progress made on projects for Summer 2019, stating that the new field turf at Kehler Stadium is due to be installed next week, installation of new

emergency generators is underway, and work on intermediate school lobbies and bathrooms, along with bathroom renovations and new door installations at the high school, are set to begin once the school year ends.

## **POLICIES**

The Board approved for first reading the following policies:

- 7434 - Smoking on School Grounds (Property)
- 7435 - Alcoholic Beverages on School Premises (Property)
- 8500 - Food Services (Operations)
- 8630 - Bus Driver/Bus Aide Responsibility (Operations)
- 8830 - Flag Display (Operations)

## **CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND PROGRAMS**

The Board approved district field trips and overnight field trips as correlated with curriculum.

The Board approved for first reading the following curricula:

### English

English I

English II and II Honors

English III and III Honors

English IV

### Mathematics

Discrete Math

Math of Personal Finance

Probability & Statistics

The Board approved Student Teacher/Intern candidates for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years.

Curriculum Committee Chair Amy Root reported on a recent committee meeting at which K-12 English/Language Arts supervisor Dr. Tiffany Jacobson and three high school ELA teachers reviewed the core English courses while K-12 math supervisor Elizabeth Delasandro discussed semester electives.

## **FINANCE**

The Board accepted with gratitude a gift of \$3,280 from the Jefferson School PTO to construct a pergola in the new outdoor classroom/garden off Lansdowne Avenue.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Technology Chair Michael Bielen reported on a recent meeting at which Chief Technology Officer Brian Aufer briefed the committee on more than 20 technology-related projects taking place this summer including 345 new Chromebooks, 11 Chromebook carts, and 18 interactive projectors to be set up at various schools, a technology upgrade at Kehler Stadium, a complete renovation of the television studio at Westfield High School, new video conferencing software, and continuing work on a digital electricity initiative. Mr. Bielen noted that the committee also heard from Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Programs Paul Pineiro about his recent participation in a STEM forum in China as part of an international partnership that pairs elementary, middle and high schools in New Jersey with counterparts in Zhejiang Province.

## **NOTES FOR THE RECORD**

Board member Brendan Galligan reiterated that district policies undergo a five year review and, if no substantial changes are needed, they are listed here.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

The Board approved a resolution that would recommend to the U.S. Department of Defense that former Westfield High School principal Dr. Derrick Nelson be posthumously awarded the Soldier's Medal, 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. Board member Gretchan Ohlig thanked Mr. Galligan for a well-researched, well-written resolution that "honors Dr. Nelson well." With the Board's approval, Mr. Galligan stated that he will submit the resolution and supporting documents to the Secretary of the Army.

## **LIAISON REPORTS**

Board member Kent Diamond reported that he attended a recent meeting of the Tamaques Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) at which the question was asked whether it would be appropriate to hold parent-teacher conferences at the end of the school year.

Mrs. Oster attended the year-end meeting of the Union County Educational Services Commission where topics included the UCESC's professional learning communities and successful goals for the year.

## **FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN WORKSHOP**

Following a more than two hour workshop discussion on full day kindergarten, the Board agreed to hold a special election in March 2020 for a bond referendum to build an anticipated 16-18 additional classrooms at an estimated cost of \$10-million, followed by another public vote in November 2021 on a separate proposal seeking voter approval to exceed the annual 2% cap on the tax levy increase and increase the district operating budget by an additional approximate \$3-million to pay for further staffing and operating costs. It is important to note that both measures would need to be approved for full day kindergarten to be available in September 2022.

The estimated cost of the \$3-million operating budget increase to the taxpayer, Mrs. Sullivan said, would be \$285 per household in Year 1, with that amount expected to increase each year due to salary and benefit increases and other operating expenses. Mrs. Sullivan estimated the cost of preparing for the March 2020 special election at \$110,000, which includes county, legal, auditing, and architectural and engineering fees.

Board members discussed the overall impact on all Westfield residents and again considered the comprehensive examination of the issue that began several years ago with a review of facilities options that had been ruled infeasible, including leasing or purchasing available properties in town, utilizing temporary trailers and/or shipping containers, and renovating/retrofitting the administration building at 302 Elm Street. Also reviewed were expansion opportunities at the district's six elementary schools, with several buildings offering limited or no room for expansion. I recommended to the Board that additions be built on Jefferson and Washington Schools.

Each board member recognized the unique and challenging circumstances surrounding this State-required, two-step referendum process. Members expressed concern about the separate

votes and noted that administration officials and certain board members had met recently with state lawmakers to explore legislative ways to combine the two measures.

I noted that Westfield is one of the 10% of school districts in New Jersey that does not offer full day kindergarten and that, while we currently continue to serve our kindergartners well, this may be something that matters in the long term to Westfield.

We will continue to update the public as a plan for the March 2020 special election is formalized.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **HIGH SCHOOL**

Congratulations to the following Westfield High School students who earned a top score of 800 on portions of the May SAT:

- John Czarnecki, Grade 11 – Math Level 2
- Spencer Feinstein, Grade 11 – U.S. History and Math Level 2
- Grace Hutchinson, Grade 11 – Math Level 2
- Maxwell Scialabba, Grade 10 – Math

Fifty-two Westfield High School students were recently inducted into the National Honor Societies for French, Spanish, Italian and Chinese, with 19 excelling in French, 14 in Spanish, 14 in Italian, and 5 in Chinese. Congratulations to all inductees for this prestigious honor and to the entire World Languages team.

Each year, the American Association of Teachers of French organizes a nationwide French exam called “Le Grand Concours”. This year, over 75,000 elementary and secondary students participated in the contest nationally. A total of 45 students took part at Westfield High School this year, 36 of them earning accolades for their achievement in the form of one platinum medal, six gold medals, thirteen silver medals, nine bronze medals and seven honorable mentions. Bravo to all of the students who participated and their teachers Méri Beliveau, Marie-Laure Hoffmann, and Rachel Janus.

### **INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL**

Two middle school members of the Westfield Debate Team took the title in Public Forum Debate on May 17, becoming first ever New Jersey champions in this particular level of debate. Congratulations to Edison 8th grader Matthew Chen and Edison 7th grader Tage Mehta on this spectacular accomplishment. The Westfield Debate Team is a partnership of the Westfield Public School District, the Westfield Parent-Teacher Council Gifted Education Committee and the Westfield Area YMCA.

The Student Government Association at Edison Intermediate School recently donated \$4,000 to Children’s Specialized Hospital of Mountainside, presenting a check to a hospital representative on May 30. Members of the Edison student government held various fundraisers throughout the school year including bake sales, candy sales, Edison Night at Yestercades, and a "Show the Love" fundraiser at which students sold paper hearts for \$1 each during lunch periods. During her visit, the hospital representative commended the students for raising the largest amount of money among those middle school, high school, and college organizations who donated this year.

### **ELEMENTARY**

Westfield third graders recently received an Honorable Mention for their mock court case, "The Case of the Conspiracy Theory," out of 108 entries submitted last year and presented this May at the New Jersey Bar Foundation Law Fair. For the past 28 years, the New Jersey State Bar Foundation has run the mock trial competition for students in grades 3-12. The Westfield team, who are now 4th graders, placed in the third grade category due to their age at the time they wrote the case. Congratulations to all of our mock trial litigators and to their adviser and gifted education teacher Esther Van Riper.

#### DISTRICT

Eighteen retiring staff members were honored by the Board of Education and by colleagues and guests at the 32nd Annual End-of-the-Year Gala for school employees on May 30. The event also paid tribute to eleven district staff members with 25 years of service. We wish our retirees well and thank our employees for their dedication to continuing Westfield's "Tradition of Excellence."

#### COMMUNITY

The Union County Prosecutor's Office hosted a Community Meeting on Juvenile Justice on Thursday, June 13 from 6-8 p.m. in the Westfield High School auditorium at 550 Dorian Road that included a panel discussion by law enforcement, community and county officials.

#### NEXT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

The next meeting of the Westfield Board of Education will be held tomorrow, Tuesday, June 18 at 7:30 p.m. in the Westfield High School auditorium at 550 Dorian Road. Please note this change of location. We will recognize a large number of students for academic, athletic, and performing arts achievements. A complete agenda of the meeting is available under the Board tab on the district website and in the Business Office.

**Margaret Dolan, Ed.D.**  
**Superintendent of Schools**

***Westfield Public Schools – A Tradition of Excellence***

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