

**Synopsis of  
Westfield Board of Education Meeting on April 30, 2019  
By Superintendent Margaret Dolan**

The Board of Education began the meeting with a moment of silence for Westfield High School Principal Dr. Derrick Nelson who died earlier this month. “There are not enough words to describe how we all feel about the death of our beloved WHS principal. Stunned. Devastated. Heartbroken. Grieving,” said Board President Peggy Oster before calling for the moment of silence. “Yet there are endless ways to describe the kind of person Dr. Nelson was: Inspiring. Caring. Respected. A leader. A patriot. A role model. A man of service and sacrifice.” On behalf of the entire Board, Mrs. Oster extended sincere condolences to Dr. Nelson’s fiancée, his daughter, his parents, and the many other family members and friends who mourn him.

Mrs. Oster also recognized Westfield High School wrestlers C.J. Composto and Luke Hoerle as Region IV Champions in their weight classes. C.J. concluded the season with 35 wins and just 2 losses and finished third in the individual boys wrestling state championship and fifth in the national tournament, while Luke finished in the top 12 in both the state and national tournaments. The Board also honored Wrestling Coach Glen Kurz who was named both District Coach of the Year and Union County Coach of the Year this season.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING ON 2019-2020 BUDGET**

The Board unanimously adopted the school district budget for the 2019-2020 school year. The budget, which was adopted on a tentative basis by the Board on March 12, 2019, was approved the Executive County Superintendent of Schools on April 9, 2019.

Business Administrator Dana Sullivan presented [a summary](#) highlighting the financial and educational aspects of the budget. She gave examples of the high level of academic accomplishments by our students and noted that the majority of the budget is allocated toward instruction.

- The total operating budget is \$108,461,563.
- The budget:
  - maintains class sizes within policy guidelines,
  - maintains funding for recently approved courses and school resource officers,
  - provides funding for a health and wellness coordinator and recess requirements,
  - maintains fund balance at 2%,
  - stays within the 2% CAP plus eligible waivers.
- The budget demonstrates the district’s record of efficient spending and cost containment through self-insured medical and prescription plans, cooperative purchasing, solar energy savings, shared services with the Town of Westfield, and other measures.
- Although the district expects to receive a slight increase in state aid, the amount is well below the amount due Westfield if the state formula were fully funded.
- The average increase to homeowners is approximately \$275.
- Westfield continues to maintain its cost per pupil at less than similar school districts and the state average.

#### **PERSONNEL**

The Board accepted with regret the retirement of the following staff as of June 30, 2019:

- Lyn Aleksandrowicz - WHS Art
- Robert Brewster, Jr. - WHS Science
- Mary Dailey - McKinley School Fifth Grade
- Donald MacDonald - Wilson School Physical Education

These four longtime staff members together have worked a total of 142 years in Westfield schools. For 26 years, Dr. Dailey has been a strong advocate for her students and has mentored countless colleagues. Caring and respectful, Ms. Aleksandrowicz began as an art teacher in 1986 at the elementary level, moving to Edison and then to Westfield High School for the last 13 years. All of Mr. MacDonald's 38 years have been served at Wilson School as a physical education teacher, where his energy, passion and flexibility has guided his students to see the lifelong value of physical education. And Mr. Brewster's impressive career spans 45 years during which he has had a meaningful impact on students in his biology classes and on the baseball field. We certainly wish these four valued colleagues well in retirement.

Additionally, the Board approved Assistant Principal James DeSarno as Interim Principal of Westfield High School through June 30, 2019. All three of our assistant principals stepped up to a difficult task at a difficult time and I thank Mr. DeSarno, Mabel Hunyh, and Warren Hynes for their leadership.

The Board also approved the appointment of Margaret McFadden as Acting Assistant Principal through June 30, 2019. Ms. McFadden retired last year as WHS assistant principal and we welcome her expertise at the high school as we navigate these last two busy months of the school year.

## **FACILITIES**

Facilities Committee Chair Gretchan Ohlig noted that the Kehler Stadium renovation is progressing well and that other summer projects, including renovation of the WHS TV studio and generator installation, were discussed at a recent committee meeting. Ms. Ohlig said the discussions also included minor proposed changes to the building rental policy for Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) as well as full-day kindergarten, both of which, she said, are ongoing conversations.

## **LONG RANGE PLANNING**

Long Range Planning Committee Chair Amy Root reported that the committee again reviewed the issue of full-day kindergarten, noting that the Board and district administrators have carefully considered many options over the past several years. Mrs. Root said the committee discussed the feasibility of a referendum to allow voters the chance to decide. She explained that the district would need to build an anticipated 14-17 additional classrooms at an estimated cost of \$10-million, followed by an increase to the operating budget of approximately \$2.6-million to pay for additional staffing and operating costs. Both measures would need voter approval in two separate referendums as required by the State. Mrs. Root pointed out the risk that the first referendum authorizing construction might be approved while a second referendum to increase the operating budget, with a much larger impact on the taxpayer, might be voted down, leaving the district with new classrooms but no way to staff them. She acknowledged the challenges surrounding the topic but said the Board will continue to examine the best way to put the issue on the ballot so that Westfield residents can decide the issue. Mrs. Root also noted that enrollment for next year appears to be remaining steady but that the Board will continue to monitor the numbers.

Ms. Ohlig reiterated that the Board's decision not to bring the issue to a vote two years ago was based on multiple factors including the town-wide property tax revaluation, the then-unknown impact of changes to federal income tax laws, and community input. The Board is now considering, she said, how to formally present it to the voters to decide.

Mrs. Oster stated that the Board recognizes the benefit of full-day kindergarten but that, with the current lack of space in the district, the question remains how best to address the issue.

## **POLICIES**

The Board approved for second reading the following policies:

- 1523 Comprehensive Equity Plan (Administration)
- 1550 Equal Employment/Anti-Discrimination Practices (Administration)
- 2610 Educational Program Evaluation (Program)
- 2622 State Standardized Pupil Assessments (Program)
- 3240 Professional Development for Teachers and School Leaders (Teaching Staff Members)
- 5111 Eligibility of Resident/Non-Resident Pupils (Pupils)
- 8461 Reporting Violence, Vandalism, Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, Alcohol and other Drug Offenses (Operations)
- 9410 Blue Devil-TV (Community)

Policies Committee Chair Brendan Galligan stated that he and Board member Kent Diamond attended an annual meeting to review the district's Code of Conduct. Mr. Galligan noted that students, teachers, community members, and administrators, including myself and Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Dr. Michael Weissman, were in attendance. He stated that the findings will be discussed at the next meeting of the Policies Committee.

## **CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND PROGRAMS**

The Board approved district field trips as correlated with curriculum.

The Board approved for first reading the following curricula:

### Mathematics

Computer Science I

Computer Science II AP

Computer Science III Honors

### World Languages

World Languages, Level IV, IV Honors & IV AP

World Languages, Level V, V Honors & V AP

### English Language Arts

Intermediate Language Arts, Grades 6-8

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

Curriculum Committee Chair Amy Root reported on two recent committee meetings at which members reviewed high school Computer Science courses, continued discussion of changes to the World Language curricula to align themes and topics consistent among the Romance languages, and discussed the intermediate school English/Language Arts curriculum with K-12 Supervisor of ELA Dr. Tiffany Jacobson and teachers from Edison and Roosevelt Intermediate Schools, who outlined ways they are collaborating and aligning the curriculum between the two schools.

## **FINANCE**

The Board accepted with gratitude the following donations:

- A gift of \$20,494 from the Roosevelt Intermediate School PTO to fund cabinet installation.
- A gift of \$3,999.07 from the Lincoln School PTO to fund a new PA System as their end of the year gift.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Digital electricity was the topic at a recent meeting of the Technology Committee, according to committee chair Michael Bielen. Mr. Bielen reported that members received an overview from Chief Technology Officer Brian Auker about the use of Power over Ethernet (PoE) for many of the district's devices and how use of digital electricity as a secondary source of power, along with generators and uninterruptible power supplies, will allow the district to stay online through all stages of an extended power outage. Mr. Bielen noted that the committee also reviewed policies related to Board member use of social media.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Mr. Galligan reported that, at the Board meeting on May 7, he expects to present a resolution nominating Dr. Derrick Nelson for a U.S. Department of Defense award.

## **LIAISON REPORTS**

Mr. Diamond reported that the annual Westfield Memorial Library Book Sale opened Tuesday, April 30 and runs through Saturday, May 4.

Mrs. Root stated that she met recently with the Westfield Green Team to learn about their many initiatives, including the town's first Free Market this Saturday, May 4 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the South Avenue Train Station Lot at which residents can donate or take home yard sale quality items to re-use instead of buying new. For a list of accepted goods and Free Market activities, visit [www.westfieldnj.gov](http://www.westfieldnj.gov).

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Board heard from two residents who strongly support full-day kindergarten. The residents asked the Board about its action plan, pointing to similar school districts that have implemented full-day kindergarten and expressing concern that families with young children may choose to move elsewhere. Mrs. Oster and other Board members spoke to the comprehensive examination of the issue two years ago that included a town-wide survey which indicated that

residents support full-day kindergarten but were not willing to support the significant additional costs. Mrs. Oster also mentioned the unique circumstances that exist in Westfield, that creates the need for funds for both facilities construction and then an increase in the operating budget to account for staffing needs. She noted that in every instance cited where other towns had implemented full day kindergarten, they did not have the facilities issue that exists in Westfield. Mrs. Oster stated that the most cost efficient option would be to build two additions to two schools. While no decision has been made, Mrs. Sullivan explained that, under the State-required 2-step referendum process, the first referendum asking for voter approval to build the additions at roughly \$10-million would likely take place in March 2020, followed by a second referendum a year and a half later, seeking voter approval to exceed the annual 2% cap and increase the operating budget by approximately \$2.6 million. Board members discussed the possibility of reaching out to state officials to see if the two referendums can be combined, should the Board agree to go forward with the referendums.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **HIGH SCHOOL**

Six more Westfield High School students recently achieved the highest score possible on portions of SAT and ACT standardized tests. Top scorers on the March SAT with an 800 in Math are 11th graders Evan Branagan, Aidan Kilbourn, Sumana Turimella, Stephen Park, and Hasumi Tanemori. Scoring a perfect 36 on the Reading section of the February ACT is junior Morgan Rollins.

Good news from Westfield High School choral directors John Brzozowski and Maureen Francis: Following rigorous auditions, 15 WHS choral students were accepted to the New Jersey All-State Chorus. Ninth grader Mia Johnson will perform with the New Jersey All-State Treble Chorus next February at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, while the following singers will join the New Jersey All-State Mixed Chorus in November at NJPAC and at the NJEA annual convention: Juniors Daniel Andrade, Vincent Mora, Lydia Nisita, Elisa Saint-Denis and Rachel Seiden (who scored 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state); sophomores Luke Barry, Olivia Ebel, Sam Horvath, Zaria Katz, Finn McGurn, Matthew Meixner, Aishik Palit; and freshmen Charles Garretson. Congratulations to all.

Westfield High School band director Trevor Sindorf reports that the WHS Jazz Band recently was invited to play alongside world-renowned saxophonist Jaleel Shaw at the Trumpets Jazz Club in Montclair as part of an educational initiative called "Students of Jazz Programs," created by the professional jazz band "One More Once Big Band." Congratulations to Mr. Sindorf and our high school jazz musicians who played a 30-minute opening set during this unique experience to perform in a professional environment.

In May and June, the Westfield High School Athletics Department will hold sign-up meetings for Fall 2019 sports for student-athletes and their parents. A meeting schedule is available on the athletics department website. It is important that those interested in playing a Fall sport attend a meeting.

### **INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS**

A team from Edison Intermediate School will compete in the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Odyssey of the Mind World Finals at Michigan State University in May, after placing 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state competition earlier this month. Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational program for students from

kindergarten through college, with team members solving problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics at regional, state and world competitions. Additionally, the Edison team - which includes students from Roosevelt Intermediate School - won the prestigious Ranatra Fusca Creativity Award for exceptional creativity in an idea or execution of that idea as part of the competition solution. Congratulations to the following team members and their coaches: Edison 7<sup>th</sup> graders Benjamin Ackerman, Lucas Gunzberg, Avery Keith, Nathan Reynders, Maxwell Rotter, and Roosevelt 6<sup>th</sup> graders Ted Crall and Owen Ing with coaches Aaron Keith and Ken Rotter. Congratulations also to our elementary teams from McKinley/Wilson and Tamaques/Jefferson who each placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the state competition.

The Optimist Club of Westfield announces that nominations for the 22nd Annual Intermediate School Outstanding Teacher Award are due by Friday, May 10. Two intermediate school teachers – one from Edison and one from Roosevelt Intermediate Schools – will be chosen to receive the award at an Optimist Club dinner and will be honored at a Board of Education meeting in June. Nominations should specify ways in which the teacher has demonstrated outstanding teaching, interest in children and continued pursuit of professional growth. The nominee must be a full-time teacher in the Westfield Public Schools in grades 6-8 for a minimum of five years. Students, parents and staff are encouraged to submit nomination letters to: Outstanding Teacher Award Committee of the Optimist Club of Westfield, c/o Office of the Superintendent, Westfield Public Schools, 302 Elm Street, Westfield, New Jersey 07090. Letters can also be e-mailed to: [optiaward@westfieldnj12.org](mailto:optiaward@westfieldnj12.org).

### **DISTRICT**

Last call for PTC Scholarship donations. The Westfield Parent Teacher Council is currently reviewing scholarship applications and has many incredible candidates. Donations are down by \$5,000 from last year so please consider making a donation to the PTC Scholarship Fund by this Friday, May 3. Donations of any size are most appreciated. Make a donation via Venmo @ PTC-Scholarship or by mail to: Westfield PTC, 302 Elm Street, Westfield, NJ 07090, Attention: D. Kenney.

### **COMMUNITY**

The College Woman's Club of Westfield will host a Trivia Night fundraiser this Friday, May 3 at 7 p.m. at Scotch Hills Country Club, 820 Jerusalem Road in Scotch Plains. All proceeds benefit the club's scholarship fund for young women from Westfield High School. Admission is \$75 and includes dinner, drinks, silent auction and trivia contest. For information, contact [cwc.westfield@gmail.com](mailto:cwc.westfield@gmail.com).

### **NEXT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

The next meeting of the Westfield Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, May 7 at 7:00 p.m. at Jefferson School, 1200 Boulevard. Please note this change of time and location as we honor this year's Philhower Award recipient, Jefferson 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Anna Carissimo. The complete agenda will be available on Friday, May 3 on the Board section of the district website and in the Business Office at 302 Elm Street.

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

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