



# **BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE Minutes**

June 4, 2018

The Board of Education Committee of the Whole met on June 4, 2018 at 5:32 p.m. in the Joseph M. Porto Community Room at Marie Murphy School, 2921 Illinois Road, Wilmette, Illinois. The President called the meeting to order and asked the Board Recorder to call the roll.

The following members were present:

Louise Dechovitz, Vice President  
Dan Garbis  
Gil Gibori  
Joel Raynes  
Sheryl Swibel  
Jamie Taylor  
Rick Zelinsky, President

Also Present:

Debbie Cotter, Videographer  
Beth Dever, Chief School Business Official  
Suzie Clampitt, Board Reporter  
Jessica Hutchison, Principal, Avoca West  
Dr. Kevin Jauch, Superintendent/Board Secretary  
Matthew Palcer, Principal, Marie Murphy  
Terry Sofianos, Director of Pupil Services

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## **VISITOR COMMENTS**

Adrienne Cruz, Director of Special Education Intern, introduced herself to the Board, stating she will be working with Terry Sofianos this summer.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **A. Technology Review: 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade iPads**

Board President, Rick Zelinsky, led a discussion regarding the administration's request for iPads at 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade stating that when the recommendation was introduced, the Board of Education was in need of more information in order to gain a full understanding of the request. Now that the Board members had been able to ask questions and receive feedback, the discussion should move toward a decision on the recommendation. At that time, each member of the Board was able to provide additional feedback and their individual stance on the deployment of iPads in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade for the 2018-2019 school year.

Mr. Gibori stated that he felt that the first presentation did not provide enough educational context or support for his approval at that time, but that through the evolution of the presentations, he has been able to gain the information he needed. Mr. Gibori noted that the financial aspect of this request, though it would be a small, strategic spend, was worth the effort of reviewing because the district is currently deficit spending. Mr. Gibori also inquired as to why the push was to deploy iPads in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade as opposed to other grades. Avoca West Principal, Jessica Hutchison, responded that the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade team has exhibited interest and ability to use the technology in a way that is innovative. Ms. Hutchison also noted the pedagogical appropriateness for that grade level based on the developmental level of children at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Ms. Hutchison also stated her belief that now is not the time to launch iPads at several grade levels, but that leading out with an experienced and enthusiastic team will allow for a more systematic implementation in other grades in the future.

Mr. Garbis inquired whether the Board was voting on the deployment of iPads at this meeting and whether the technology team would have enough time to order and set the devices up for implementation if the vote is delayed much longer. Mr. Garbis also stated that he considered the iPads as a supply, and considers supplies to be the responsibility of the parents to provide for the students, especially if it is a valuable tool that they will use in future years. Mr. Garbis noted that this BOE decision should be made based on the financial and strategic facts and to trust the educators to follow through with the appropriate implementation.

Mr. Taylor stated that the purchase of the iPads is within the budget the Board approved for technology and trusts the administration and educators to decide whether or not the tool is appropriate for the students.

Ms. Swibel stated that a large part of her initial hesitation regarding the deployment of iPads in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade was a need for better articulation of the plan associated with this proposal beyond the initial purchase. Ms. Swibel believes that a governance decision does need to consider the need versus the want of the devices and that the ongoing discussion has moved the Board in the direction of better understanding the rationalization of the purchase. Ms. Swibel would like to have a clearer picture of the expected outcomes, vision and essence of the program.

Mrs. Hutchison shared that she strongly feels that they have an opportunity to push the envelope regarding what the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students can do with the devices. They will use them to create, as opposed to consume. She has a real sense that the tools will help the students grow in regard to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Ms. Hutchison noted that at this time, there is not an articulated plan specifically for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, but that the District technology strategic plan will be used to guide this deployment.

Mr. Raynes stated that he needed to process the bigger financial picture prior to making his final decision. At this time, he is in support of the iPads as it falls within the technology budget and trusts the administration and educational staff to make the right decisions for the students.

Ms. Dechovitz stated that it would have been an easier decision for her if there would have been a pilot, so that there would have been a tangible articulation of goals for the program. Ms. Dechovitz would feel more comfortable if the Board was planning their way out of deficit

spending. She felt that while this purchase is not a large cost, it is not a one-time expenditure that will continue to require funding. Ms. Dechovitz also mentioned creating a technology philosophy and use policy or document to guide the District regarding student learning via technology. Dr. Jauch added that reviewing the technology strategic plan could be of benefit at this time for better understanding of the request.

Mr. Zelinsky concluded that the discussion has been helpful and could be used as a model for the Board for future presentations, as it was necessary for the BOE to talk about the whole picture in order to dissect this type of expenditure. The Board will vote on the deployment of iPads in 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade at the June 21<sup>st</sup> Board meeting.

#### **B. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Issue Unit Resource**

Dr. Jauch updated the Board regarding concerns received from some parents regarding the book, *My Name is Bilal*, which is used as a resource for the social issue unit in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Dr. Jauch invited the two parents who raised specific questions at the May Board meeting to meet with him in person, so he could respond to their inquiries. First, the parents wanted to know who selected the resource. Dr. Jauch responded that a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher selected the book while searching specifically for a picture book on the topic of religious discrimination. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade team then approved its use for the unit. All 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes have used it for 3 years.

Secondly, the parent inquired as to the district's stance on the use of the book in the future. Dr. Jauch responded that based upon Avoca's BOE Policy Manual and the diversity reflected in the student body, the administration takes the stance that the book is appropriate for the purpose for which it is intended. At the BOE meeting, Dr. Jauch shared that after reviewing the text, the District's legal counsel stated that the lesson and the use of this book in that lesson does not violate the establishment clause of the first amendment of the constitution regarding the separation of church and state. Therefore, the District will continue to use the text. Dr. Jauch did share that he felt improvements could be made to the lesson. In the future teachers will preface the lesson by sharing that students have varying beliefs and they all have the right to be respected for their beliefs. The teachers will explicitly state that the lesson is about religious discrimination in society and is not meant to promote any specific religion or the lack thereof. Finally, the Author's Note at the back of the book will not be included, as it does not directly contribute to the objective of the lesson.

Mr. Zelinsky noted that this topic has opened an opportunity to review instructional policies regarding these types of lessons. Those policies will be reviewed by the Board Policy Committee and, if any changes are recommended, they will be presented to the Board for discussion.

Ms. Dechovitz read a statement about the issue that she prepared upon her reflection of the book. Ms. Dechovitz stated that she saw the story as a story with an important message about diversity, tolerance, understanding and respect of others, but understands and respects that may not be the opinion of others. Ms. Dechovitz valued the opportunity for people to share their views. She believes this is a good time to review our policy on instructional materials for the classrooms and defer the matter to the policy committee. Ms. Dechovitz trusts in our teachers and administrators to implement the policy in good faith and with the best interests of our children in mind.

Ms. Taylor noted that the district should notify parents when units that are socially sensitive are being covered.

Mr. Garbis suggested that there should be a policy in place to notify parents when students are going to be discussing controversial topics.

Mr. Gibori does not believe that it is necessary for the Board to review their policies in response to isolated grievances.

## **CLOSED SESSION**

Ms. Taylor moved that the Board move into Closed Session for the purpose of:

The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1); and

The setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(6).

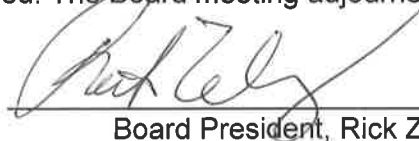
Mr. Garbis seconded the motion. Upon roll call, members voted as follows: Mr. Garbis, aye; Ms. Taylor, aye; Ms. Swibel, aye; Mr. Gibori, aye; Mr. Raynes, aye; Mr. Zelinsky, aye; and Ms. Dechovitz, aye. Motion carried.

The Board moved into closed session at 6:57 p.m. and reconvened in open session at 9:50 p.m.

Mr. Raynes moved that the Board return into open session, and Ms. Taylor seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, with all members voting aye, the motion was carried.

## **MEETING ADJOURNS**

Mr. Raynes moved to adjourn the meeting, and Ms. Taylor seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, with all members voting aye, the motion was carried. The Board meeting adjourned at 9:51 p.m.

  
Board President, Rick Zelinsky

  
Secretary, Kevin Jauch