

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Oceanside Board of Education, Oceanside Union Free School District, duly called and held on Tuesday, November 3, 2015, at 7:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the District Office, 145 Merle Avenue, Oceanside, New York.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

In Attendance: President Transom, Mr. Blau, Mr. D’Ambrosio, Mrs. McGrath-Mulhern and Mrs. Schoell. Also in attendance were Superintendent Harrington and Assistant Superintendents Fenter and Van Cott, and District Clerk Green. Vice President Maresca, Mrs. Garrity and Dr. DeRosa were not in attendance.

A motion was made by Mr. D’Ambrosio and seconded by Mrs. Schoell at 6:01 p.m. to move into executive session in the Board Room of the District Office.

A motion was made by Mrs. Schoell and seconded by Mrs. McGrath-Mulhern at 7 25 p.m. to adjourn executive session and move into public session.

CALL TO ORDER - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

In Attendance: President Transom, Mr. Blau, Mr. D’Ambrosio, Mrs. McGrath-Mulhern and Mrs. Schoell. Also in attendance were Superintendent Harrington and Assistant Superintendents Fenter and Van Cot, and District Clerk Green. Vice President Maresca, Mrs. Garrity and Dr. DeRosa were not in attendance.

ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Dr. Harrington advised that today was Conference Day in Oceanside for our staff and it was a very productive and informative day for all who attended the various workshops and conferences. Dr. Harrington advised that Mrs. Tara Mauer, Director of Math K-12, will be providing an overview of the various changes that have taken place in Mathematics in Oceanside over the years.

UPDATE/MATHEMATICS CURRICULUM GRADES K-12 – Mrs. Tara Mauer provided a presentation on how math has changed in Oceanside from 1977 through 2016. Mrs. Mauer distributed a packet titled “Mathematics – Historical Overview” (attached to the records of this meeting). Mrs. Mauer indicated that math instruction has changed dramatically and often and it is a testament to our teachers that we have been able to persevere through these many changes. Each shift in math resulted in new standards, instructional strategies, assessments, programs and professional development. The most dramatic changes occurred during the past few years. Mrs. Mauer highlighted some of the previous math programs (Sequential I, II, III, Mathland, Connected Math, Integrated Algebra and enVision Math). However, in 2011 Common Core Learning Standards were implemented which resulted in the most dramatic changes to the math program.

Common Core at the high school level required preparing for two different courses with two different exams but despite these changes, Oceanside students have excelled. Our state assessment scores in grades 3 – 7 have improved considerably since 2012 and we have outperformed a number of high-performing districts. Parent workshops, Parent Academies and PTA P.A.S.S. meetings have been conducted over the past few years and our teachers provide regular extra help to their students as well as to parents. Teachers administer four district wide benchmarks throughout the year.

Mrs. Mauer indicated that Jessica Keegan has provided support at the elementary level. They both meet on a regular basis with cross sections of teachers at all grade levels at all elementary schools who have been able to provide feedback in areas that need emphasis.

Mrs. Mauer advised that at the middle school for over 10 years more than 90 percent of students have completed the Algebra course and Regents exam in grade 8. This course is offered to almost all middle school students as compared with many districts which offer it to only a select group of students. Last year, in the middle of the year, teachers were informed that students would be given an opportunity to take the “Old” Regents vs. the “Common Core” Regents which resulted in a split in Algebra results. This year, we are all working together to help students meet with success on the Common Core Regents. Students requiring additional support have a dynamic tool called “mathxlforschool.com which students can use for homework as well as during the math workshop classes. In addition, we offer a Fundamental Math course in grades 7 and 8 for a small group of students requiring additional instruction prior to taking Algebra.

Mrs. Mauer advised that at the high school level our students have more opportunities to take higher level math since they are taking Algebra in the middle school. As a result the number of students taking AP Calculus has tripled. Over 90 percent of high school seniors are taking math in their senior year. The guidance department works hard to ensure students are enrolled in math for 4 years. Mrs. Mauer also indicated that she encourages parents to keep their students enrolled in math in their senior year.

Mrs. Mauer also indicated that Oceanside High School works closely with Nassau Community College and last year we offered College Prep Algebra and every student enrolled in the course was able to take credit-bearing courses at Nassau. In addition, we offer Computer Science and a Math Research program.

In summary, Mrs. Mauer stated that while we are aware that while we are in a state of continuing change, the decisions we have made are always in the best interest of our children. She thanked the Board of Education, Dr. Harrington, Mr. Fenter, staff and parents for their support.

The Board thanked Mrs. Mauer for her presentation. They indicated having received concerns from parents concerning math homework. Very careful thought should be given to what is sent home for homework. Every teacher should review their worksheets so that there are no errors. The Board also encouraged teachers to place comments on the Commissioner’s page as to what they feel is inappropriate with the Common Core math program and what needs to be corrected. They have until December 1st to place their comments.

Dr. Harrington encouraged parents who have concerns or questions to call the teachers, write a note and use the on-line resources which are available. She indicated that the Board of Education has done many things we should be proud of, such as, adding the College Prep course and, as a result, Oceanside has outperformed many districts on Long Island.

Community members raised questions concerning math homework. A question was asked concerning how what the difference was between the old Algebra Regents and the Common Core Regents. Common Core is very wordy and becomes very confusing.

Mr. Blau left the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

A question was raised concerning how teachers are monitored. Mr. Fenter advised that many different people go into the classrooms to observe teachers and department meetings are held to review classroom and teaching issues.

A parent questioned why freshmen and sophomores have access to Wi-Fi, but junior and seniors do not. Why are half the students being denied Wi-Fi? Mr. Fenter explained that was discussed at technology meetings and it is something that must be phased in for security reasons and also to guarantee the integrity of the network. We have numerous devices and we must have the capability to handle these devices.

Mrs. McGrath-Mulhern left the meeting at 8:55 p.m. There was no longer a quorum.

ADJOURNMENT – A motion was made by Mr. Transom to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

Mary Ann Marino
Secretary to the Board of Education

Robin D. Green
District Clerk