The Board of Education’s special meeting was called to order by President Stephen Coupe, at 7:03 p.m., in the LGI at Central Valley Academy. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all those present.

Members Present
Stephen Coupe, Pres.
William Lennox, Vice Pres.
Vicki Judd (arrived 7:12 pm)
Daniel LaLonde
Walt Roginski
Fred Schell
Matthew Shedd

Members Absent
None

Staff Present
Dr. Richard J. Hughes
Shannon Darrow
Lisa Hoffman
Garrett Olds
Lisa Alexander
Patty Day
Jim Humphrey
Vickie Pagnotta
Jody Balash
Mary Day
Dick Keeler
Conrad Phillips
Julie Ball
Michelle DelConte
Gina Kirkpatrick
Lori Pickett
Noresta Baum
Andrea Donahue
Dorothy Knapi
Michele Pilla
Carol Bechard
Susan Earl
Mandy Knowles
Tara Raux
Amy Billings
Sarah Enea
Jeremy Kozak
Jeremy Rich
Amy Brien
Debbie English
Fran LaPaglia
Angela Rorick
Kate Brien
Rob Fehrman
Tim Lawrence
Christina Roth
Colleen Bunce
Arelys Ferdula
Barbara Lennox
Gina Scaparo
Brittani Canipe
Rebecca Fogerty
Johanna Levi
Sarah Seamon
Aaron Carey
Karen Fogerty
Vicky Lynch
Lori Slaughter, IMUT
Amy Casale
Dawn Forte
Kelly Macisco
Jessica Stentz
Kerri Chard
Sharee Forte
Jodi Marusic
Teresa Sponburgh
Molly Ciallelo
Joanne French
Shelly McCarthy, IMUT
Cheryl Stack
Jonathan Cole
Andria Hartman
Terra McDermott
Mary Thorp
Jane Connors
Jade Hassett
Shauna Michael
Kim Vitale
Nancie Cooney
Paula Higgins
Tammy Morgan
Maggie Wesolowski
Jonna Costin
Martha Higgins
Jeff Mower
Holly White
Diane Cotton
Todd Hoffman
Patricia Murray
Melissa Williams

Guests Present
Lisa Marie Alexander
Carol Denison
Paul Lynch
Kelly Rowland
Robert Alexander
Julie Dewan
Marcia Lynch
Nicole Russell
Holly Bacon
Kathy Donahue
Rodney M.
Darrell Sanders
David Ball
Tanya Elthorp
Jessica Martin
Kim Sanders
Christina Beckwith
Brian Engel
Rebecca May
Deborah Schoff
Eric Beckwith
Cathy Eysaman
Michele McCann
Richard Schoff
Steven Bergin
Ed Eysaman
Rachael McCaw
Lori Seymour
Michael Bergin
Lindsay Forbes
Jaclyn McDowell
Jamie Seymour
Shawn Bishop
Kathy Fuhrer
Michael McGraw
Juliann Skinner
Harry Bosch
Diane Goldin
Josh McGuire
Melissa Smithson
Jon Boucher
Thomas Goldin
Lauren McGuire
David Snyder
Trish Boucher
Nicole Guido
Linda Mills
M. Sara Sperl
Heather Boucher-Zieno
Michele Herringshaw
Eric Moreau
Terry Stanley
Tim Brien
Crystal Hilts
Julie Moreau
Lisa Stanley
Patrick Brien
Gail Hoffman
Ted Morey
Karen Steele
Eric Brinski
Danielle Huffman
Jessica Morey
Shannon Stewart
Allison Brinski
Sarah Hussein
Allie Morgan
Connie Stowell
Karen Brown
Jody Janicki
Jayne Morgan
Aileen Sweeney
Jeremy Brown
Erica Johnson
Shawn Murray
Jacque Terzioski
Theresa Brown
Cara Johnson
Leslie Nicolette
Donna Thompson
James Brownrigg
Justin Jones
Jane North
Michelle Treen
Shawna Brownrigg
Karen Jones
Matt Obreza
Cody Turk
Jessica Canipe
Sara Jones
Jen Olds
Rosa Valdivia
Shannon Canipe
Kevin Joyce
Ashley Ossont
Kellie View
Kelly Cave
Julie Joyce
Jason Ossont
Joshua Watkins
Sharon Clapper
Heather Judd
Carol Paddock
Diane Watkins
PRESENTATION

Mr. Coupe, Board President, reported that the Board recently received a packet of concerns/questions/suggestions from a group of concerned parents. Copies of those packets were made available at the meeting by the parent group. Mr. Coupe explained that the Board has reviewed the packet and has outlined this evening’s presentation to review the following categories: Mission Statement and Strategic Plan, curriculum, grouping, transportation, communication, NYS Assessments/testing, and elementary realignment.

(Copy of packet on file in District Clerk’s files.)

When the merger took place in 2013, the Board met to work towards a mission statement that would provide the goal of career readiness, college readiness, graduation of all students, lifelong learners, progressive and relevant educational foundation, progressive and relevant social foundation. After a number of meetings and much discussion, the following Mission Statement was developed and adopted in July 2015: “The Central Valley Central School District will provide a relevant, progressive educational and social foundation to graduate all students as lifelong learners prepared for career and/or college.”

Once the Mission Statement was adopted, the Board asked for people to join on the Strategic Planning and Partner teams. The team worked on developing a plan and how to put that plan into motion. In September 2015, the group met to develop belief statements. The following four goals were developed as part of that plan:

Goal 1 – Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, by the end of 2nd grade, the literacy and numeracy skills of all students will be at or above grade level.

Goal 2 – Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, all students in grades 3-8 will be proficient on the state assessments.

Goal 3 – Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, all students will graduate with a Regents diploma with a minimum of 50% achieving a Regents diploma with advanced designation.

Goal 4 – Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, all students will explore post-secondary careers aligned to their career plan and have their career plan updated annually.

Actions steps were reviewed for each of those goals. The focus of the strategic plan will be on aligning curriculum, lesson structure, assessment, and resources. The use of differentiated instruction and technology will allow for personalized learning. This will be a multi-year process that will continue to be refined as the year progresses.

Educational Performance – Information was reviewed regarding kindergarten entry level performance levels. Lisa Hoffman, Director of Student Services, explained that the data reflects that many Central Valley students are performing below proficiency for their grade level. Discussion took place regarding grouping students by ability to provide the additional assistance that they need to help them be successful.

Ms. Hoffman explained that the following multiple measures are used to determine student progress: report cards, benchmark assessments, standardized assessments, and faculty recommendations. An explanation of direct consulting and co-integrated teaching models was provided.
Transportation – A map of the district was reviewed. The district covers 53.3 square miles with 76% of students living in the village. Out of 1,506 potential riders, there is an approximate ridership of 986 students, or 65%. Dr. Hughes reported that 98 students currently ride the bus for an hour or more, while 227 students ride for approximately 45 minutes. A large number of students arrive at school approximately a half hour before school starts. After waiting in the hall during that time, students then start with breakfast in their classrooms, causing a total wait time for some students of almost two hours before learning begins. The district is looking to solve this problem and has conducted two transportation studies to assist in that effort. The study suggests that a ridership audit be conducted three times per year.

The district is eligible to receive transportation aid in the amount of 90%. However, extracurricular activities are considered to be “dead miles” which brings the actual aidable amount down to 75%.

Dr. Hughes reported that the possibility of adding bus runs and making adjustments to arrival and dismissal times are being reviewed in an attempt to reduce ride times. Pros and cons of these options were also discussed. It is anticipated that any new route information would be made available to parents by the end of June.

On behalf of the Board, Mr. Coupe acknowledged that more communication needs to take place to explain what is actually being changed compared to what changes are being considered. In an effort to increase communication, the district plans to start sending out a quarterly newsletter in addition to what is currently posted on the school’s website.

PUBLIC FORUM

Many staff, parents, and community members were in attendance this evening to hear about the strategic plan and changes being proposed in the district. Below is a general summary of their questions and thoughts expressed. When possible, the names of individuals who spoke are included. In the case where the name of the individual speaking was not certain, that individual is referred to in the minutes as “a parent”.

Tara Raux – Referred to a statement made during Dr. Hughes’s presentation and stated that she was very offended by the comments about individuals working part-time and getting full-time pay. She noted that many in attendance at this evening’s meeting still had not been home yet today.

Gail Hoffman – Stressed the need for fidelity to a program, staff, and noted that does not see that. It appears that the plans are muddled and unclear, leaving teachers, parents, and taxpayers confused. Teachers and principals are in a position to act as parents and role models to children and we need to allow them a voice that is heard and respected.

Discussion took place with regard to such resources as McGraw Hill, Wonders, and Envisions. Dr. Hughes reported that these are all resources/curriculum used by our teachers.

Bonnie Coffin – Referred to a statement made by Dr. Hughes indicating that the strategic goals were the Board’s. Dr. Hughes stated that the staff and community team members came up with the goals and he supports them fully. In the area of transportation, she does not feel that extracurricular is a priority. In regards to the topic of elementary realignment, Ms. Coffin stated that she does not know of people that are requesting it. Feels more time is needed and noted that it is as important to listen as it is to lead.

Jaclyn McDowell – She has heard about good instruction and how our teachers are involved in these decisions. Asked where the teacher involvement has been as the teachers do not seem to understand what is happening either. Dr. Hughes reported that an invitation was sent out district-wide seeking volunteers to serve on the strategic planning team. A few faculty members did volunteer to join as team members.
Mr. Coupe noted that the idea to realign started with Dr. Tangorra. After Dr. Hughes was hired, the idea was tabled and there was conversation with faculty and administrators about it. Mr. Rich, Elementary Principal, agreed that he was involved in discussions that took place with parents and faculty about the Princeton model and noted that there are both a lot of pros and cons. When discussed, some of the positives included all teachers being in the same place for collaboration, aligned curriculum between two schools, and being able to work side by side with peers to increase consistency. This would also eliminate school zones and parent requests to change zones which becomes complicated and time consuming. Mr. Rich acknowledged the negative of losing the current elementary configuration in each community. However, at the time of the merger vote, it was stated that there may come a time that realignment could occur.

Mr. Rich stated that the district continues to look at increasing efficiencies in the area of transportation in order to have students on the bus for the least amount of time possible. If there was an easy solution to this problem, the district would have already fixed it. Mr. Rich stressed that the district is doing the best it can with the resources available. People will agree and disagree with decisions, but at some point we have to move forward. Although not everyone will be happy, it is our job to make it work as we all want what is best for our kids. Mr. Rich stated that we all have to be leaders at this time and help find solutions to any disagreements or problems.

Tara Raux – Stated that although she respects what Mr. Rich had stated, she feels it is ludicrous to say that everyone was in favor of these changes when they were not.

Deb Schoff – Thanked the Board for holding the meeting tonight. Although the Board, administrators, and teachers are doing a great job, the proposals are a landslide shift in the way we do business. Most people can accept change when they are part of the discussion. She feels these changes are too much too fast and that the public does not have enough information to agree or disagree as they have not been part of the discussion. If there are going to be changes, tell us why and how it is going to help our kids.

Mr. Coupe thanked Kelly Rowland and members of the parent group for submitting information to the Board prior to this evening’s meeting. Ms. Rowland read a prepared statement at this time on behalf of the concerned parents. She noted concern that Dr. Hughes was not the one addressing the public’s concerns during this evening’s meeting.

(Copy of statement on file in District Clerk’s files.)

Rebecca May – Stated that she was ashamed of the Board labeling our kids and stated that she feels this is discrimination. She noted a lack of communication and expressed a desire to have the buses and schools stay just the way they are.

Melanie Welch – Stated that she attended the meeting to get answers, but feels she is leaving with more questions than she originally had from the Board’s April meeting. She never saw anything from the district seeking volunteers to serve on the strategic planning committee. Dr. Hughes reported that announcements were made online and in the local papers. Ms. Welch stated that she agrees the district needs changes, and has listened about curriculum alignment, but hasn’t heard anything about putting our kids first. The computer programs mentioned as educational tools are just programs – they won’t fix what is broken. Teachers know what to do for our kids – ask them. Appreciates options being reviewed regarding transportation.

Matt Shedd, Board member, stated that there isn’t a person here that doesn’t care about our kids. The Board was elected by the community and is trying to make the district better. He also is a taxpayer and has three children in the district - one in each building. The Board is working to try to help move the district forward in a positive motion to help our kids with the extra help they need – not trying to label kids. The district is 35 out of 36. We can’t maintain the status quo.
Terry Stanley – Questioned the realignment of schools and the consistency of education being provided with the closing of Jarvis as a result of the capital project. Dr. Hughes explained that the curriculum plan calls for classrooms to be added at the elementary schools. Jarvis would be emptied for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years as the majority of the work would be taking place there. From a safety standpoint, it would not be possible to keep Jarvis open due to heating, cooling, and construction work.

Holly Yardley - Thanked the Board for giving up their time with their own families to do this for our kids. Expressed concern with the grouping proposal and feels that all students can shine in the right environment. A mix is needed for proper growth. Ms. Yardley noted that in a direct consulting model, the regular education teachers would only receive partial support. She asked whether there was a community that already does this model and has found it to be effective.

Diane Cotton – Asked what assessment shows that Central Valley is 35 out of 36 schools. It was noted that this was an overall school ranking conducted by the Business First publication. Several members in the audience noted that they had seen this ranking in the newspapers. In addition, information on this ranking is available on the district’s website.

Nicole Russell – Stated that she opts her children out of all assessments and questioned what measures would be used to determine placements for her children.

Mrs. Hoffman reported that multiple measures will still be used. She also reported that in her discussions, some of the teachers do want to do this. The problem is that there are only a certain number of spots available. The district will need to wait until June and meet with teachers in order to determine needs and then review with the CSE for final decisions to be made. Mrs. Hoffman explained the membership of the Committee on Special Education.

Mr. Rich agreed that academic achievement and teacher recommendations would be used as measures when assessments were not taken. He noted that there are areas that need to be addressed with a co-integrated model, including what students will be included. We need to be sure the students are receiving what they need. Sometimes it may appear that way on paper, but may not necessarily be the best scenario for the students. Work will need to be continued to determine what the best option for each student is while trying to fit a model to our culture that will work. This will continue to be a work in progress.

Michele Herringshaw – Questioned whether there was enough time to implement all these changes prior to September. Mr. Rich stated that we have to deal with the time we have – that is not a choice.

Jody Janicki – Stated that she served on the Strategic Planning Team as Dr. Hughes had invited her to be on the committee. She felt that it was a canned process – very fill in the blanks. She asked how realistic the goals were - specifically, all students graduating with a regent’s diploma. Dr. Hughes stated that he feels all students should have the same opportunities available to them. The plans are to support all of our students.

A suggestion was made for the Board to create an advisory committee.

Jennifer Olds - Shared her thoughts on ability grouping and asked if a child would be moved to a different classroom if they reached or cannot sustain certain benchmarks. Mr. Rich reported that some parents may want kids moved, some may not. It would be the teacher’s responsibility to determine whether they have met that benchmark.

Cheryl Stack – Stated that some teachers had been brainstorming ideas to increase the Walk to Read program. The idea of adding a pre-third grade class in order to provide additional help to those students not yet ready to move on to the next grade level was discussed. The teachers were asked to review their ideas with their building principals.
PUBLIC FORUM (cont’d)

Mrs. Hoffman reviewed the direct consulting model which is based on multiple measures. The proposal calls for students in grades 4-8 to be heterogeneously grouped.

A parent asked if ability grouping had been decided on. Mr. Rich reported that it had not and that the district will continue to look for any better solutions in order to meet the needs of our students.

Becky Kubecka asked about the use of the Walk to Read program. Mr. Rich explained the use of this program and noted that the goal is to meet the needs of our students. Discussion continued regarding self-contained classes and the state numbers. Kelly Rowland noted that a substantial amount of professional development would be needed.

Rose Bussey asked about parent involvement and what happens if the parent doesn’t agree. Discussion continued.

Holly White suggested that the research be made available to the public.

Gina Kirkpatrick reported that the second grade Walk to Read model is working beautifully and noted that the teachers would like to continue this. Sometimes students at the PreK – 3 levels are just not developmentally ready. At times it is the parents holding them back. Dr. Hughes asked what would be done differently if a student was held back for an additional year.

Maggie Wesolowski stated that the teachers should have been involved in this process well before now. She does not feel that students should be placed based on iReady data. Mr. Coupe acknowledged the need to involve the faculty more. The Board appreciates the faculty’s candor and passion in their profession.

Heather Judd stated that she supports the Walk to Read program. While students are able to be moved based on ability, she feels a little more time is needed. There are currently great programs in place and feels the Board should give it another year.

Jessica Slentz stated that with ability grouping, the kids still see it as labeling.

A parent stated that she feels individualized instruction is needed. The district should look at what other schools are doing successfully as we do not need to spend time reinventing the wheel. The Board should review the data and research to see what is best.

A parent stated that the community is focusing on what is best for children. The gap is that all groups are not coming together and the Board and administration are seeing something we can’t see. We want to all get to the same solution and do what’s best for kids, but this seems too fast. There are still a lot of questions and people want more evidence for the ideas being discussed tonight. We need to all work together to get to a solution.

Lisa Alexander – Feels that the reigns should be put on ability grouping as she feels it is idiotic. Students will rise to the level of expectations. She spoke against ability grouping and noted that everyone benefits from best practices. Things learned here can never be measured on paper. She stated that morale is very low here and is worried that people will move on. She asked the Board to regroup and look inward when making these decisions.

Dr. Hughes announced that ability grouping will be taken off the table.

Kevin Joyce – Stated that he was not in favor of the realignment. Putting all the kids in the same school doesn’t mean they will receive the same instruction.

Bonnie Coffin – Spoke about the website and non-tenured employees. She does not want to see a mass exodus in a non-financial crisis.
Kristen Lindberg, student – Stated that although it has been stated that there is no retribution, she has talked to a lot of teachers and has heard there are a number retiring and there are alleged firings. The mood of the school has changed since the first of the year and she does not feel the teachers are being treated the way they deserve. She expressed her appreciation for the teachers and respect for the Board. More respect is needed for our teachers because it also affects the students.

Brooke Macisco, student – Also spoke about retribution. When students ask what is going on, the teachers won’t tell them -- either because they can’t or they don’t know.

Matt Obreza – Parent and former community CAC member. Stated that we need to remember that hours and hours were spent on giving out details during the merger process to get things worked out. There was a lot of communicating with the community and stressed that more communication is needed now. He does not want to hear about staff cuts after we merged to provide more opportunities for our students. In regards to grouping, he feels more information is needed as to how it would work. He feels there are too many irons in the fire at this time. We have to trust the teachers, administration, and the Board of Education members that were elected. Thank you to Mr. Rich for answering so many questions this evening.

Ray Pitcher – Asked what happens with tracking at the elementary level. Will the lower students be automatically dumped into vocational programs? This has a negative effect on students. He stated that he was union head at Herkimer CSD and knows that transportation issues need to be looked at contractually. He also noted that tenure is a process which does not allow for teachers to be unilaterally fired.

Mary Thorp - Thanked the Board members. She stated that our students are not prepared for college when they leave here and change is needed. Several faculty members have retired, left, or have been shifted to other positions. She is concerned that the teachers do not have the support they need. She agreed that morale is a huge problem and needs to be addressed as teachers are feeling unsupported and not appreciated. Ability grouping and Walk to Read are working well in both buildings. We need to admit that we need to do something else as our kids are not prepared.

Mandy Knowles – Stated that she served on the Strategic Planning Team. She asked for confirmation that the Strategic Plan would be continued. Mr. Coupe and Dr. Hughes confirmed that the plan will continue to be a work in progress.

Karen Brown – Urged those present to contact the school directly with questions instead of turning to Facebook for answers. She met with Mrs. LaPaglia and was able to get her questions answered.

A parent asked how decisions are actually made. Dr. Hughes explained that the Board’s main function is policy, budget, and hiring. They have been discussing reorganization and grouping. The realignment was voted on by the Board in December. Grouping – The Board is relying on the principals, staff, and resources to implement this plan. A parent noted that all of these decisions should be transparent.

Julie Joyce - Asked the Board to consider rescinding the motion to realign as parents need to be on board.

Deb Schoff – Asked how and when the Board would move forward in getting information out to parents about where/when they will be going to school, transportation, ability grouping, etc.

Mr. Schell reported that this is done through the district’s website, newsletter, and local newspaper. Consideration may also be given to using the school messenger system. He asked what other methods of communication the public would prefer. A parent stated that he receives communication constantly which is sent home in his child’s backpack. It was suggested that the Board consider this as well.
PUBLIC FORUM (cont’d)

Julie DeWan – Stated that she receives monthly newsletters home from principals. However she is hearing too much by word of mouth about these important changes. She expressed an interest in joining the task force. If too many changes take place at once, it will be difficult to determine what had a positive impact.

Mr. Coupe asked for those interested in serving on a task force to please contact the District Office and/or Board of Education via email.

A parent suggested that an open house be planned for students if there is a realignment.

Marcia Lynch asked if the Board would consider rescinding the realignment. Mr. Coupe stated that the topic will be revisited by the Board in an open session discussion at the Board’s next regular meeting on May 25, 2016.

A parent asked if PTO meetings were still active in the buildings. The principals confirmed that they are. It was also noted that all meetings are posted on the website calendar.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. LaLonde, seconded by Mr. Shedd, the Board adjourned their regular meeting at 10:04 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

Marsha Griffith
District Clerk, Board of Education