

October 12, 2023, in the Central Office Conference Room at 7:00 p.m.

This public meeting is viewable on the Voluntown School YouTube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3I7dQmnXMxoTINHzaSZ1zw>
 Citizens were welcome to attend in person to share their comments.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** - Chairperson Kate Beauparlant called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Present:

Kate Beuparlant (Chairperson)
Meagan Wicks (Vice Chair)
Cathy Grant (Secretary)
Valerie Muschiano
Christopher Wilson

Arikka Kalwara
Sarah Thompson

Adam S. Burrows (Superintendent)
Amy L. Suffoletto (Principal)
Dee Dee Jackman (BOE Clerk)

Chairperson Kate Beauparlant read the BOE Mission Statement.

CITIZENS / COMMENTS – None

- ## II. GUESTS – None

III. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION # 1 (10/12/23) was made (Grant/Wilson) for the Board to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; all in favor; motion passes.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

1. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Submitted by Amy L. Suffoletto)

Mrs. Suffoletto distributed a seven-year STAR Enterprise Assessment Data Analysis with preliminary data for 23-24. Also distributed was the VES PBIS Model; Voluntown Eagles S.O.A.R. and the MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) Service Pyramid. She also noted the continuation of our comprehensive mentor program at VES and distributed the flyer requesting adults to make a commitment for the school year. Community members are welcome to apply to be a mentor for a student.

The Process for testing, evaluating 504 and IEPs were reviewed and discussed. Mrs. Suffoletto explained that once a student is assessed and qualifies, appropriate accommodations and/or modifications are recorded and reviewed with teachers through a Binder system which has been a successful tool. Parents also receive updates about support services for another school year.

Mr. Burrows distributed a Spotlight on Safety newsletter announcing an Evacuation Drill to the Voluntown Baptist Church on Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 9:15 a.m. Our School Safety Committee

will meet after to review the effectiveness of our safety procedures. Our Voluntown “All Hazards Plan” will be reviewed for 23-24 edits before being submitted to the State Police prior to the annual due date of November 1st for all Connecticut school systems.

Mr. Burrows noted that VES is in the final stages with Preston School System to hire a part-time Social Worker, who will be paid utilizing recently received grant funds.

When asked about the new Spanish program, Mrs. Suffoletto reported that the students were transitioning very well. The Board expressed the desire for VES to offer a full Spanish program next year, even if that means utilizing two part-time language teachers.

Upcoming- October/November

Early Dismissal Friday, October 6th 12pm
 No school Monday, October 9th
 Book Fair October 18-20th
 Book Fair Family Night Thursday, October 19th
 K-2 Grandparents Day Friday, October 20th
 NESS Field Trip Grade 8 - October 23rd
 Spirit Week October 30th
 Picture retakes October 31st
 Grades 6-8 Dance Nov. 3rd
 Veterans Day Assembly Nov. 10th
 Early Dismissal Nov. 10th 12pm

Students as a Focal Point

- **Exploratory Spanish** - Grades 7/8 have begun their exploration into Spanish this year. Students were eager to begin learning a new language before high school and be able to have some experience with a second language.
- **Fall Sports** – Students in grades 5-8 are participating in a Soccer clinic 2 days per week with Margaret Volland and Shayne Evans (VES 2015). This has been great for students who want to learn the sport and continue to be active. Additionally, grades 6-8 were invited to participate in a basketball clinic once per week with Coach Duncan to work on skills before the season.
- **Fire Safety** was celebrated with our PreK – 2nd grade students who had a visit with the Voluntown Fire Department. They talked about fire safety and were able to see the fire truck and ambulance up close.
- **School Lunch Program** - The school lunch program saw an increase of numbers this past year due to free breakfast and lunch. For the 23-24 school year, funding will support FREE breakfast for all students and Free lunch for free/reduced qualifying students. Full pay is \$3.75 per lunch meal. Students should grab a breakfast and enjoy.
- **Benchmark Testing** - All benchmark testing has been completed for September. Benchmark testing is completed universally three times per year and reviewed with our interventionist, grade level teams and administration.
- **Connecticut State Assessment Individual Student Reports (SBAC, CTAA, CAPT, CMT, Skills Checklist)** - Completed and all student reports will be sent to families when received in September 2023. Review of testing and action items will be done at the end of September and throughout the school year.

Curriculum, Learning, and Instruction

- **Regular Education and Special Education Updates** - At the start of the year teachers, paras and staff members receive and review student documentation regarding IEP and 504 plans. During the year, the student services staff, regular education teachers and administration meets on a regular basis to ensure all student needs are met. Regular education and special education team members work to make adjustments as needed to ensure student success. Parents are an important piece to the process and can connect with the students' case manager, school counselor, or classroom teacher at any time with questions or needs for support.
- **Curriculum/Committee Work** - Teachers continue with professional learning that promotes new initiatives, learning strategies, while working with their grade level teams on curriculum and

implementation of programs. This year teachers will focus on Into Reading and Into Literature, aligning writing instruction/practices and expectations, additionally aligning Science, and Social Studies items into the ELA documents, as well as other curriculum areas to ensure we are meeting the needs of all students. Revamping of pacing guides, benchmark assessments, and report cards will also be throughout this year.

- **VES Website/Social Media** - Great effort has been made to update and post current information/resources for families. VES also hosts a Facebook and Instagram page for communication.
- **Professional Development** - Teachers and Paras continue with professional learning as determined for school year 23-24 on early dismissal days, committee meetings and professional learning and grade level work takes place.
- **Teacher Evaluation Plan / TEAM** - Any plan updates will be reviewed with the PDEC committee and according to State guidelines. TEAM is meant for beginning teachers. Julia Lavin and Sarah Seifert have been assigned a mentor that will guide them through the two-year process.
- **Grants/Reports/Applications**
 - **Connecticut Office of Early Childhood** - The monthly School Readiness Reports for the Voluntown Elementary School Pre School and School Readiness Program have been updated for submission by the monthly due date.
 - **FY 23 School Readiness and Quality Enhancement Grants** have been awarded and received.
 - **NAEYC Accreditation** – Accreditation is through 2027 and SR staff continue to work in the portfolio to ensure all action items are met and completed regularly.

Technology, Building, Grounds, Transportation & Safety

- Mike Creaturo, Technology Coordinator, continues to support IT needs within the building.
- Brian Kallio, Director of Maintenance, continues to review, implement, and address needs within our school building and on our grounds related to reopening of school. He has worked to maintain our building over the hot summer months and into September.
- Anne Michaud, Director of Transportation, continues to review and address needs within our transportation department. Anne has finalized bus routes for all bus runs and has made adjustments due to arrival times to ensure a smooth back to school.

Community and Public Relations

- **PTO** - Suggestions are welcome for the school year. Contact Hailie Davis hdavis@voluntownct.org.
Voluntown PTO is looking for parent members. Without parent members, we will not be able to host events. Consider supporting an upcoming event.
- **Youth Service Bureau/Local Prevention Council** – The YSB-LPC Advisory Board meets virtually on the third Wednesday each month at 5:00 p.m. Contact Melinda Bryan mbryan@voluntownct.org.

2. DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES (Lloyd A. Johnson, PhD)

- Dr. Emily Casey, our consulting psychologist, led our department members in exploring the Feifer Assessments of Reading and Writing. She has administered these new assessments recently for a few of our students. These assessments are more accurate in identifying Dyslexia and Dysgraphia than previously used. We purchased these assessments for our department with grant funds. The training in the Feifer Assessment of Reading was conducted on October 13, 2022. The training on the Feifer Assessment of Writing was conducted on September 21, 2023. Our Special Education teachers have begun administering the FAR. We have acquired the Feifer Assessment of Mathematics designed to identify Dyscalculia (learning disability in math). Our staff will receive training on that assessment in January.
- By October 12, 2023, this Director will have chaired 24 PPT/504/Parent Meetings held with the following schools: VES, The Learning Clinic in Brooklyn, EastConn's Northeast School in Killingly, EastConn's Autism Program in Columbia, Norwich Free Academy, Wheeler High School, Griswold High School, Griswold Alternative School, The Marine Science Magnet High School in Groton, and the Norwich Transition Academy.

The census of students in Pre-K to 12+ receiving special services is as follows:

	10/1/2021		10/1/2022		10/6/2023	
	IEP	504	IEP	504	IEP	504
PreK -8	34	31	34	36	38	34
9-12+	20	15	18	18	16	12
TOTAL	54	46	52	54	54	46

3. **SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS** (Submitted by Adam S. Burrows)

- Calendar of Events for October and November 2023
- The District Enrollment Report noted 236 students in Pre-K to 8th grade and 127 high school students.
- \$6,045.00 has been returned to the Town of Voluntown Undesignated Fund from grants, rebates, and other unanticipated savings received.
- NFA letter on newly hired Speech and Language Pathologist
- LEARN Regional Calendar for 24-25
- Performance Matters - CSDE – August 2023
- CABA Legal Issues Workshop – 10/24/23 – Middletown, CT
- CABA Policy Highlights – September 19, 2023 (CABA's Policy and Regulation on Generative AI); October 6, 2023 (Kindergarten Entrance and Play)
- CABA Delegate Assembly – Thursday, November 16, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. at the Mystic Marriott
- 23.32% of the 23/24 Budget has been expended and as of 10/1/23 we have a remaining balance of \$5,409,826.91
- Annual audit for our school district is now in its final stages. A special thank you to Darlena Loranger, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, and Crystal Snyder, Accounts Payable/Payroll Manager, for all their documentations in this process and for keeping our school on time and in compliance with all state statutes that guide the process.
- A student request to visit NFA was received. There was an unanticipated slight delay in meeting our October 1 deadline for transfers and Mr. Burrows requested authorization from the Board to follow through with his review.

MOTION # 2 (10/12/23) was made (Grant/Wilson) to authorize the Superintendent to take appropriate action, at no cost, regarding the transfer request based on a comprehensive review; all in favor; motion passes.

- Mr. Burrows noted he received a communication that the State of Connecticut completed the 2023 fiscal year with a surplus that equals \$551 million. The Special Transportation Surplus was \$682 million. The state has maximized its Rainy Day Fund.

VIII. **OLD BUSINESS**

1. **Budget 22-23**

All purchase orders for 22-23 have been processed and a list of all transfers for 22-23 was approved by the Board of Education on 9/12/23. October 1st of each school year is an important date because the extensive PSIS report is due to the state and this is used to document year-to-year enrollment numbers.

A Voluntown Town Meeting on May 30, 2023 officially approved the Board of Education budget for 2023-2024 of \$7,055,334 which represented an increase of \$205,001 or 2.99% over the 2022-2023 budget of \$6,850,333. The BOE worked to prevent a MIL increase impacting the town during these challenging times and authorized the Superintendent to make adjustments to utilize savings in various accounts to accommodate price increases in other areas of the budget that is also considered a "spending plan" due to changes that occur each school year.

2. **Budget Preparation Timeline for 24-25**

This timeline has been developed in cooperation with the Board of Selectmen to keep them informed about educational priorities, needs of our students, and the goals of our school system based on a long-term Strategic Plan developed through a comprehensive "Community Conversation" process.

Thursday	11-09-23	Current curriculum initiatives and projected 24-25 curriculum priorities
Thursday	12-14-23	Review 24-25 projected costs for Transportation and Maintenance
Thursday	01-11-24	Initial Superintendent summary proposal of 24-25 budget to the Board
Thursday	02-08-24	Superintendent's updated 24-25 Proposal submitted to Board of Education
Thursday	02-22-24	Board of Education "Budget" Meeting (if needed)
Thursday	03-14-24	Updated 24-25 budget proposal presented to Board of Education
Thursday	03-18-24	24-25 Budget Proposal is sent to the Town Clerk for public dissemination
Thursday	04-18-24	Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m. about the 24-25 education budget proposal and Board of Education approval of the 24-25 budget proposal
Thursday	04-22-24	Budget proposal for 24-25 delivered to Town Clerk for dissemination
Tuesday	05-07-24	Possible annual Town Meeting to vote on Budgets Voluntown Elementary School gymnasium at 7:00 p.m.

3. Federal and State Grants

The following is a summary of short-term grants:

2021 through 2023

- COVID Relief Fund (\$176,639 – Expended)
- Elementary/Secondary Emergency Relief Funds or ESSER I (\$32,674 – Expended)
- Elementary/Secondary Emergency Relief Funds or ESSER II (\$136,204 being expended)
- American Rescue Plan or ARP-ESSER III (\$306,105 being expended)
- Special Education Stipend Grant (\$20,000 Expended)
- ESSER II Special Education Recovery Grant (\$30,000 – Approved)
- ESSER II Bonus Special Populations Recovery Grant (\$25,000 – Approved)
- ESSER II Bonus Dyslexia Recovery Grant (\$3,250 - Approved)
- Homeless Grant (\$1,770 – Application Submitted)
- USDA School Lunch Program Equipment Grant (\$25,000 Expended)
- Comcast local grant to school systems (\$3,500 approved and being expended)
- Sp. Ed. Grants (\$10,000 for Certified and \$5,000 for Non-certified – Expended)
- HVAC Grant request of \$170,000 to State of Connecticut (submitted on 12/1/22)
- Special Education Stipend Grant #2: Application from CSDE will soon be distributed.

2023 -2024

- A Mental Health 3-year federal-state grant has been approved for our school system and we will receive allocation of \$25,150 in 23-24, \$25,150 in 24-25, and \$17,605 in 25-26 for a total amount that equals \$67,905. We will be able to use some of the funds to secure part-time Social Worker services from Preston.
- Received a Title IV grant for \$10,000 to purchase technology instructional supplies
- Received Title I (\$42,320) and Title II (\$5,878) grant funds totaling \$48,198 to partially support our SRBI (Scientifically Researched-Based Interventions) program that offer reading and math support for identified students.

The above grants are additional allocations for a wide variety of COVID and other related priorities especially related to improving air quality in schools throughout the nation, addressing learning loss, supporting technology connectivity, additional PPE of Personal Protective Equipment, etc. These funds were not used to replace the day-to-day and year-to-year school expenditures for our local school budget.

4. Building Committee Update

The Building Committee meeting was held on September 12, 2023. Kate Beauparlant, a committee member, gave a verbal update about the wide range of projects that have been completed and also a number of upcoming projects that are under consideration.

5. NFA 2025-2030 Contract Update

A Master Agreement Design and Development Schedule (a plan for negotiating the upcoming 2025-2025 contract with NFA) was provided along with the Agreement between the Voluntown Board of Education and Norwich Free Academy.

Nate Quesnel, Head of School, updated Mr. Burrows about the Partner District Master Agreement Process: NFA is working on developing a timeline for discussions and process. As soon as this is complete, he will share with it with the Partner School Systems for review. He will begin cultivating a draft Master Agreement.

It was noted that we will work to cross reference all nine Partner District documents and get in touch regarding any irregularities, as we start the negotiation process for the 2025-2030 contract.

Mr. Burrows reviewed the intent of a letter he is composing to Mr. Quesnel, NFA Headmaster, to recommend a process for comprehensive review of potential cost-savings for Special Education support at NFA. He recently attended a very positive meeting at NFA with the Partner Districts and Mr. Quesnel, and everyone expressed interest in reviewing cost-savings strategies.

A Special Meeting of the Partner District Superintendents is scheduled for October 31, 2023, in Sprague. The group will seek to coordinate recommendations and suggestions for negotiating the 2025-2030 NFA and Partners Districts Contract.

6. Safety on Route 138 Update

Mr. Burrows spoke with Tracey Hanson, Voluntown Selectwoman, who reported that the plan that was reviewed with the BOE at the last meeting on 9-14-23 has now been submitted to the DOT. We are awaiting a response. The Board suggested reaching out to our state representatives and possibly even Governor Lamont in hopes to expedite our plan with DOT. A suggestion was made to include the PTO and get the community/parents involved with submitting letters to the governor on this topic.

7. Technology Manual 23-24 (3rd review)

The Technology Manual is in the process of being revised and the consideration of creating an additional Technology "Handbook" for Parents/Students because of the wide range of topics related to technology. It was mentioned that Mike Creaturo, our Technology Coordinator is also involved in this comprehensive review of published technology resources for our school system.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

1. Personnel

MOTION # 3 (10/12/23) was made (Wilson/Grant) to appoint Margaret Volland and Shayne Evans as Coaches for the Soccer Clinic; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 4 (10/12/23) was made (Grant/Muschiano) to appoint Darlena Loranger and Anne Michaud as Co-Head Coaches for Cheerleading; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 5 (10/12/23) was made (Grant/Muschiano) to appoint Julia Lavin as Head Coach and Chuck Salter and Kevin Diplino as Assistant Coaches for Girls Basketball; all in favor; motion passes.

MOTION # 6 (10/12/23) was made (Grant/Muschiano) to appoint Ed Duncan as Head Coach and Joe Miller as the Assistant Coach for Boys Basketball; all in favor; motion passes.

2. Administrative Update Regarding Annual Process on IEP and 504 Plans

(Reviewed and noted in the Principal's section above.)

3. Policy # 4132 – Publication or Creation of Materials (1st reading – Tabled to the next meeting)

4. Policy # 5125 – Confidentiality (1st reading – Tabled to the next meeting)

5. Policy and Regulation # 6141.323 – Internet Filtering (2nd reading)

MOTION # 7 (10/12/23) was made (Muschiano/Grant) to approve Policy and Regulation # 6141.323 on Internet Filtering as presented; all in favor; motion passes.

6. **Policy and Regulation # 6141.3273 – Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence)** (1st reading – No action was taken. Tabled for future revisions by CABE.)
7. **Policy and Forms # 6162.51 – Survey of Students** (1st reading – Tabled to the next meeting)
8. **Policy # 9327.1 – Board Member Use of Internet Social Networks** (1st reading-No action taken.)
9. **Pre-K Field Trip**

MOTION #8 (10/12/23) was made (Wilson/Grant) to approve the Pre-K field trip to the Farmer's Daughter in South Kingston, RI on 10/27/23; all in favor; motion passes.

X. UPCOMING MEETING(S)/AGENDA ITEMS

- BOE Meeting – Thursday, November 9, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Central Office
- Budget Preparation Timeline 24-25 (Curriculum initiatives and curriculum priorities)
- Building Committee Update
- NFA 2025/30 Contract Update
- Technology Manual 23-24 / Parent & Student Technology Handbook
- Policies/Regulations (2nd reading) – 4132, 5125, 6141.323, and 6162.51

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION # 9 (10/12/23) was made (Wicks/Muschiano) to adjourn at 8:44 p.m.; all in favor; motion passes.

	Date		Attest		Date
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Respectfully drafted and edited by:

Dee Dee Jackman, Board of Education Clerk

Adam S. Burrows, Superintendent of Schools

APPROVED AT THE 11/9/23 BOE MEETING