



# MINUTES

SPECIAL WORK SESSION THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
NORTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
**Wednesday March 6, 2024 (6:00 PM)**

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## 1.0 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

### 1.1 Pledge of Allegiance

Request all to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

## 2.0 Roll Call

### 2.1 Call of the Roll

#### BOARD MEMBERS

Nicole Taulbee  
Mark Gilbert  
Jim Detzel  
Chris Heather  
Nancy Slattery

**Number in Attendance: 33 Guests**

## 3.0 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

### 3.1 Motion to Adopt Agenda

The Board President recommended to adopt the agenda as presented.

#### **ORIGINAL - Motion**

Member (**Chris Heather**) Moved, Member (**Jim Detzel**) Seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion 'The Board President recommends to adopt the agenda as presented'. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **5** Nay: **0**. The motion **Carried 5 - 0**

Nicole Taulbee	Yes
Mark Gilbert	Yes
Jim Detzel	Yes
Chris Heather	Yes
Nancy Slattery	Yes

## 4.0 WORK SESSION TOPICS

### 4.1 Student behavior management systems and disciplinary processes

The Board of Education met to review and discuss policy and procedures related to student behavior management systems and disciplinary processes.

Superintendent Darrell Yater, Director of Student Services Dustin Gehring and Attorney Erin Wessendorf from Ennis-Britton moderated a discussion between the Board, principals, assistant principals and other staff members in attendance. The discussion was kept at a high level with no discussion of specific incidents or students.

#### Discussion:

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** We've had several recent events that have caused concern for community members. Our role as the Board is to set policy. Everyone here is an expert and we want you to share your concerns, what's working and how the Board can support you.
- **Mr. Yater:** We're speaking at a global level today about data and policy and procedures related to student behavior.

Ennis-Britton attorney Erin Wessendorf reviewed the NEOLA policies related to student discipline (5600's section). Each spring there is a collaborative process between the District and buildings to review student support guidelines and the code of conduct. Teachers and administrators utilize codes based on what's appropriate for the individual situation.

#### Discussion:

- **Mr. Ryan Whitaker (Asst. Principal, MHE):** It's really a collaborative process. Everyone is at the table and everyone's voice is heard.

**Mr. Matt. Haws (Asst. Principal, CHS):** Last year during the process we added two 400-level codes

**Mr. Casey Scherz (Principal, TE):** It's nice to collaborate with the other buildings and get an overall picture of what's going on within the District. We can look at needs and determine if the codes fit our current needs. Do we need to revise the codes?

**Mrs. Jamel Weathers ( Principal, PRE):** Last year we were able to address the issues we've been having with smart watches.

**Mr. Gehring:** We look at what the typical response is to the different levels of codes. We roll up all the information gathered at the annual meeting into one document and send it to everyone for review before submitting suggested code updates to the Board for approval.

We want to know the common occurrences and we want to address the issues consistently across the District.

**Mrs. Kristin Grote (Principal, WOMS):** I've worked in several districts and I've never seen this level of collaboration and frequency of conversations between the buildings and the District.

**Mr. Ali Moore (Principal, CMS):** It's really helpful to have the ability to modify or create new codes.

The use of codes for Fights/Assaults have decreased by 28 occurrences (14%) district wide from August to February in SY 2022-23 compared to August to February in SY 2023-24. Beginning this school year the discipline outcome for fighting was upgraded from three days to five days for first time fighters.

#### **Discussion:**

- **Mr. Detzel:** Has the change from three days to five days decreased fighting?

**Mrs. Alison Dreisbach (Principal, PRMS):** I think the re-entry process we've implemented has helped reduce occurrences. We meet with the student and parents together to set expectations before the student returns to school.

**Mr. Anthony Gaines (Asst. Principal, NWHS):** We try to meet with students and intervene prior to it getting to the point of a physical fight. We involve parents, counselors, administrators or whoever is needed to help mediate.

Northwest Local School District uses the R.I.S.E. method to help systematically change student behaviors. The four pillars of R.I.S.E. are: relationships, instruction, structures and expectations. Increased supervision and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are also used to help set expectations.

#### **Discussion:**

- **Mr. David Berry (Asst. Principal, PRE):** The Kid Whisperer workshop the school hosted and the staff putting in work to build relationships has helped us a lot. Kid Whisperer teaches strategies to avoid conflict and build structure.

**Mrs. Karen Hood (Principal, SE):** Teaching kids how to "do school" is a large part of what we do. We work on building relationships and expectations first. The first few weeks of school focus on building relationships and creating a family atmosphere. The expectation setting is ongoing and often requires a spring reset.

**Mr. Whitaker:** Consistency is important. You have to be proactive in telling the students to take care of themselves and each other.

**Mr. JaeVonn King (Asst. Principal, WOMS):** We work on conflict resolution and pay attention to areas of need. We have a Google form where students can notify building administrators of potential conflict amongst classmates.

**Mr. Collin Climer (Principal, CE):** Our building's PBIS team meets monthly to review referrals and identify areas that need improvement. We develop "pop-up points" to flood the kids with positive feedback in our areas of focus.

**Mr. King:** We're also trying to implement more positive reinforcement. We offer incentives and focus on our areas of need. We want to celebrate the students who are doing the right things and let them know that we see them.

**Mrs. Gina Sansone (Principal, HELC):** Operational structures play a role. The Central Supports Offices (CSO) took an interest in observing at each school this year so they could see for themselves how the processes are working. It allows for collaborative problem solving conversions.

Strategies are put in place at each building to motivate students to meet expectations both from a systemic standpoint and an individual standpoint. In addition to R.I.S.E., the District is required by law to implement a PBIS framework, adopt policies and make reports to the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW). O.A.C. 3301-35-15 sets the PBIS standards.

#### **Discussion:**

- **Mr. Gehring:** There are many versions of PBIS. The token economy is in every building. There's also a behavior matrix that sets expectations around behavior and includes progressive measures. The tier two and three interventions are individualized for each student based on needs.

**Mrs. Marlee Stephens (Asst. Principal, SE):** PBIS gives all schools a universal language around behavior. It empowers students to take ownership of their behaviors and understand the expectations. It allows us to reward good behavior.

There are several techniques buildings use to support struggling students who may be having a rough class period or a rough day. Sometimes students need a "reset" to help get them back on track and have a successful rest of the school day.

#### **Discussion:**

- **Mr. Climer:** Some students need breaks or a reset. We can call the office to have the student removed from the classroom, have a conversation and reset. This can occur in the mindful rest area or the zone room. We teach various de-escalation techniques that allow the student to prepare to reenter the learning classroom.
- **Mr. Detzel:** How often are students able to come back from the reset room? Is one time usually enough?

**Mr. Climer:** Some a couple of times, others need a call home.

**Mr. Whitaker:** We develop behavior plans if it's an ongoing issue. If they reach a certain number of referrals they get placed into a behavior group.

- **Mr. Detzel:** How many times a day is the reset room being used in elementary?

**Mr. Whitaker:** About 6 per day on average, can be as high as 20+ depending on the weather, breaks and what's going on that day.

- **Mrs. Erin Davis (Principal, CH):** In high school we have the red zone. If a student is in the red zone they get a reset at the end of the period or other times throughout the day. They may be having a rough day and we want to intervene before things escalate.

- **Mr. Detzel:** Does the teacher have to send the student to the reset?

**Mrs. Davis:** Sometimes the teachers send them, sometimes they send themselves.

- **Mr. Detzel:** When did you start doing this?

**Mr. Haws:** About seven or eight years ago. We track which students are going in and add additional discipline when needed.

- **Mr. Detzel:** Are these the same kids getting into fights?

**Mr. Haws:** Not necessarily, a lot of these kids are getting dress code violations and other minor infractions.

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** Students advocate for themselves to help prevent something from happening. It gives them a cooling off period during a bad day.

- **Mr. Detzel:** Are they doing this just to get out of class?

**Mrs. Sansone:** Even if they are, we should be asking ourselves why they're avoiding work.

**Mr. King:** We try to have several layers in place before they get taken out of class. We track data and look for problems or issues. We try to calibrate and get students the support they need.

**Mr. Scherz:** The support and wrap-around service is huge because it can be adapted to each individual student. Sometimes what happens at home can come to school with the kid. I like that we can collaborate with fellow administrators and get support when needed.

TransitionsAcademy serves as a Tier 3 support for students grades 6-12. It's available to middle school and high school students still having behavioral challenges after Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. Students are enrolled after the building meets with a student and his/her parents to complete a referral and develop goals. Students get the opportunity to

reset in a smaller setting with more support. They come in with defined goals for transitioning back into a larger classroom setting.

### **Discussion:**

- **Mr. Detzel:** Of the 120 active students what percentage return to a regular classroom?

**Mrs. Cristen Casteel (Program Administrator, TA):** About 25% return to traditional school. Not every student's goal is to go back, some have more success in the smaller setting.

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** It's a process. When they demonstrate success we bring them back, typically at the start of a semester so they have a clean start. Some students stay because they've been successful and it's the best environment for them.

- **Mr. Detzel:** How involved are the parents with kids at Transitions Academy? Can a parent request for them to stay there through graduation?

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** Some do, it happens. We're seeing an increase in kids staying at Transitions Academy. The majority of them can still participate in after-school activities.

**Mr. Gehring:** We establish a contract up front that sets what a student can and can not participate in. If they're there as part of a disciplinary process they cannot participate until they earn back the privilege.

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** So there are two parts of Transitions Academy? One for children who need additional support and a smaller environment and another for kids who are having behavioral issues?

**Mrs. Casteel:** Yes, some are referred for discipline. Most are coming in as a result of the team recognizing that traditional school isn't working for them.

- **Mr. Detzel:** I heard it was full, but it's not full. It's only at 68%?

**Mrs. Casteel:** Full is relative. We're adding more spaces to serve the younger kids. We're trying to be more proactive and address the needs of the whole child and family.

**Mr. Gehring:** It's not full but middle school spots are very tight.

**Mr. Yater:** Middle school is complicated because of licensure issues and those students needing to be segregated from the older ones.

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** Is it the high school who recommends the placement?

**Mrs. Sarah McMullen (Asst. Principal, NWHS):** It varies by student and behavior. A team decides if a student can be successful, the goal is for it to be a transition, not

permanent. If a student is placed we make regular visits to Transitions Academy and remain involved.

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** What about the kids who get in trouble and have to go for 10 days?

**Mrs. Casteel:** Families can choose to participate in our Restorative Alternative Setting (RAS) program as an alternative to out of school suspension. It allows them to keep up with their school work during their time away from school.

**Mrs. McMullen:** The behavior has to be addressed but RAS offers structure and assists with reentry so they aren't deficient in their grades.

- **Mrs. Slattery:** Are any of these people, kids with undiagnosed learning disabilities or under the radar kids?

**Mrs. Casteel:** We have not noticed that. They're usually coming to us on a plan.

**Mr. Yater:** Most of the identifications happen in elementary school into middle school. Most are identified by the time they get to high school.

- **Mrs. Grote:** Even when they're in Transitions Academy they're still our students. We continue to work with the students and their families.
- **Mr. Yater:** We see a lot of students with issues beyond what the kid can handle. We have a partnership with Best Point Education and Behavioral Health for wrap around counseling services.

**Mr. Gehring:** What does the child need and for how long? When their needs are met, a child can thrive. We need to get them what they need, when they need it.

Discipline serves three purposes: reduce recidivism, community deterrent to negative behaviors and victim advocacy. When behaviors occur, we have a responsive administrative team that uses school discipline, with a focus on relationships being the key to success, to serve purposes beyond just punishment for the sake of punishment. Discipline is 85% procedures and 15% relationships.

### **Discussion:**

- **Mrs. Dreisbach:** How are we helping the child learn from their behaviors? We try to help a student recognize their emotional state. A lot of what they do is impulsive. We want them to recognize the build-up before it happens to prevent future incidents.

**Mrs. Grote:** We build relationships with families and give them the skills to act as a partner with the school and reinforce the discipline at home.

**Mr. Berry:** We're teaching replacement behaviors to students. What can we do differently? We welcome them back with a reset. We teach them how to be good humans. Right from wrong.

**Mrs. Sansone:** We teach that they can control their outcomes. They need to pause and decide which choice to make. Give them strategies to help them feel empowered. The victims can be anyone affected by their behaviors: friends, family members, etc.

The state of Ohio has rules around discipline outcomes. Possible outcomes include in-school suspension, emergency removals, out of school suspension, expulsion and permanent exclusion. All have statutory regulations.

Under Section 504 and IDEA a school district cannot remove (suspend/expel) a student with a disability for more than 10 school days in a school year, if the behavior that is the reason for the discipline is directly and substantially related to the student's disability or the District's failure to implement a 504 plan or IEP. This determination is done through the manifestation determination review process.

#### **Discussion:**

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** Has this been happening in our district?

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** Most are not manifestations but we're still looking for the why.

**Mr. Moore:** Aftercare is an important step in supporting the child.

**Mr. Yater:** We have a continuum of support for the kids and families. We can customize a plan for each student.

- **Mr. Heather:** When I first joined the Board the IEP percentage was 10%, now it's 17%. What's the difference between an IEP and 504?

**Mrs. Wessendorf:** An IEP is 13 specific disability categories and requires specially designed instruction and related services. A 504 is about accommodations and access to services.

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** Do you need a doctor's note?

**Mrs. Wessendorf:** No, it's not generally required. Teachers and staff do evaluations but can take outside medical data into account. Some 504's (e.g. diabetes) may require a doctor's note.

To respect state and federal laws, procedures are in place to ensure students' rights are protected throughout the school discipline process. All students are entitled to due process in accordance with R.C. 3313.66. We investigate, hold informal hearings, sign



the proper forms and issue a notice of suspensions. If a child is being expelled there's a hearing and the decision can be appealed to the common pleas court.

Some notable data points were shared comparing last school year to this school year. Total Office Referrals have decreased by 623 office referrals (5%) district wide from August to February SY 2022-23 compared to August to February SY 2023-24. Occurrences of Out of School Suspension have decreased by 226 occurrences (15%) district wide from August to February SY 2022-23 compared to August to February SY 2023-24. Occurrences of use of codes for Fights/Assaults have decreased by 28 occurrences (14%) district wide from August to February SY 2022-23 compared to August to February SY 2023-24.

## Discussion

- **Mr. Detzel:** Do you feel like teachers and principals are reporting all the fights?

**Mr. Gehring:** Yes, no question

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** Absolutely, that's an immediate report.

**Mr. Whitaker:** Anytime students put hands on each other we are reporting.

- **Mrs. Davis:** We have really focused on supervision this year. We use RISE. Our reports may have increased but it's because we're out there more, we're catching more.

**Mr. Detzel:** Are teachers walking with kids in the halls while kids are changing classrooms or supervising bathrooms?

**Mrs. Davis:** Yes, we're always watching and monitoring closely.

- **Mr. Moore:** When we have to write a referral, we write it. We don't want to withhold anything. Our teacher's focus and hard work has started to pay off with decreases.
- **Mr. Gilbert:** Most fights occur during bell transitions, right?

**Mrs. Davis:** Not necessarily, but we adjust our supervision locations as necessary based on data from Public School Works.

- **Mrs. Dreisbach:** We're accountable to each other. We track a lot of data and make adjustments when new trends emerge. The District is supportive of what we're implementing.

**Mr. Whitaker:** There are quarterly reports we sent to Student Services about our data. They help us get the support we need.

**Mr. Scherz:** We have instructional team meetings with the deans every Friday to discuss

what we've been seeing. The conversation is ongoing.

**Mr. Berry:** The visibility of counselors and deans at lunch and in the common areas has helped a lot in reducing behaviors.

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** Is there a per capita number of deans required based on the number of students in the building?

**Mr. Yater:** Yes, they're allocated by a ratio per our staffing plan. Some get more resources if they have more behaviors - counselors and ALP as additional resources.

**Mrs. Taulbee:** Deans are so important, I think if we have a school that only has one dean then we should look at where we can find that resource to put two deans in place. I see how valuable they are at every school.

- **Mrs. McMullen:** I want to offer a piece of impact that I think is important to say too. Everyday we are outnumbered as administrators. We need to celebrate the teachers owning their space. The reduction we've seen is a testament to all of the hard work that the school staff has put in. Setting procedures and having that buy-in required to be successful.
- **Mrs. Taulbee:** Does everyone around this table have input into the staffing plan?

**Mr. Yater:** Every year we have staffing meetings and get input on staffing needs. We've developed the plan through the years looking at the budget, title funds, etc and we have to make hard decisions.

**Mrs. Taulbee:** To keep having these types of celebrations we need more deans.

- **Mr. Detzel:** A school that only has one dean, I don't care which one it is, they need a second one. And we need to come up with a way to get those resources and get another dean in that particular school. How many deans do you have at the high schools?

**Mrs. Davis:** Two currently.

**Mr. Detzel:** You have 1,800 kids and I know you've got assistant principals and everything but we need to get the right number of people in there to take care of this. I think it should be a priority.

**Mr. Yater:** We'll continue to look at this with the people around this table to prioritize those needs and I'll get back to you guys.

**Mr. Detzel:** Does everybody think the deans help out with the discipline problems with the schools? I think it's a no brainer.

**Mr. Yater:** It's the extra hands. There's a lot of real estate to cover on a daily basis.

As a society THC has become an epidemic. The availability, accessibility and strength has increased dramatically. Total occurrences of the use of THC codes have decreased by 44 occurrences (38%) district wide from August to February SY 2022-23 compared to August to February SY 2023-24.

For a first time drug offense the student receives a five day suspension with a recommendation for expulsion and a hearing is scheduled. Prior to the hearing the student needs to fill out a self reflection tool and the parents are asked to drug test the student in a laboratory setting. If these two items are presented at the hearing the student returns on probation after the five days. If the items are not produced then the student receives an additional four days of suspension. Before anyone can return to school they meet with a counselor to understand how this happened and how to prevent it happening again in the future.

## Discussion

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** Have you thought about increasing the days to see if the numbers go down?

**Mr. Gehring:** We look at the data every year. We look at two things: are we seeing an increase in occurrences and the recidivism rate. Our goal is to have kids in school. If we can get the same job done with five days that we get with 10 days then it makes sense to do five days. You get the same result. If the job's not getting done with five days then we need to make an adjustment. If the kid doesn't do the two things they get four more days. This is around possession, this is not around distribution. Distribution is a whole different category and a whole different outcome. Sometimes extra codes are added in addition to the drug codes which would add more time. In my mind I think it's been working extremely well.

- **Mr. Heather:** I thought I heard on the news 40% of high school students vape, does that seem right?

**Mr. Gehring:** That's probably a very accurate number. Manufacturers have found ways to disguise the vapes and make them undetectable. Stores in the community need to ID kids at the door and not sell them the devices.

- **Mr. Gilbert:** I think as a district we should look at bringing in a chemical dependency counselor (CDC). This is not going to go away, it's only going to grow. Do you think that would be a benefit, Chris (Heather)?

**Mr. Heather:** The bigger issue is accessibility.

**Mr. Gilbert:** If someone in the district is interested, you can do a CDC class online through the state of Ohio. It's 40 hours online. Does Colerain Township have the rapid response team still? Could we have the rapid response team meet with a kid that has been caught with THC or drugs.

**Mr. Gehring:** It does exist. The township doesn't have the capacity or time to do it.

**Mr. Yater:** Because the recidivism rate is so low maybe we can look into seeing if they have the capacity to target the resources towards the recidivism.

- **Mr. Gilbert:** Are the School Resource Officers (SRO) trained in any special way about this?

**Mr. Gehring:** Obviously their police training puts them in the position to recognize things. We've established some thresholds for when a student would be charged. The court capacity at juvenile court is an issue and puts them in a tough spot.

We have seen an increase in occurrences around personal communication devices (PCD). Some of the codes were revised at the beginning of the school year to address smart watches and other issues which may have resulted in the increase in occurrences. Total occurrences of PCD infractions have increased 96 occurrences (14%) district wide from August to February SY 2022-23 compared to August to February SY 2023-24.

Dress Code violations have decreased 36 occurrences (30%) district wide from August to February SY 2022-23 compared to August to February SY 2023-24.

## Discussion

- **Mr. Heather:** I've been advocating for a complete cell phone ban. The argument against that is that the parent wouldn't be able to get ahold of their child if there was an emergency. I don't think anything good comes from them. I'm curious about what the administrators here have to say about cell phones.

**Mr. Whitaker:** Children younger and younger are bringing in phones. We have to teach them to be good digital citizens. At the elementary level they have to be turned off and put away during the school day. At middle school and high school they have zones where they're acceptable but other than that they should be off and away.

**Mrs. Taulbee:** Some of those kids are going home to no one and they need that to make a phone call. That's a real reason why an elementary student may have one.

**Mrs. Weathers:** Their use of social media outside of school can bring issues to school. For us, the main issue right now is what's happening outside of school where the parents and students need support in addressing it and fixing it.

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** What action is taken at the middle school level if the student is caught with a cell phone?

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** The first infraction is a call home, second is a two hour detention. When parents say the student needs the phone for a specific reason we try to take that into account so they don't continue to move up the ladder of discipline. Our diligent enforcement has probably caused an increase of occurrences.

**Mrs. Davis:** At the high school level I think the increased supervision has led to an increase of occurrences. Hallways are now red zones and phones must be left inside the classroom in order to get a hall pass. As a result we've noticed a decrease in the amount of time people are out of class. We're always tweaking and adjusting our procedures.

**Mrs. Grote:** They're completely addicted. We're fighting a battle that's hard to win. We're piloting a "phone home" program that prevents students from carrying their phones on them during the school day.

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** Some teachers have purchased cell phone caddies and we've banned air pods this year. We've seen a huge reduction in students leaving the classroom this year because they can't bring their phone with them. We are trying some new methods with specific teachers and specific expectations so we can see what works and try to have a better plan.

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** Do you have information about repeat offenses for fighting?

**Mr. Gehring:** In the 2022-23 school year there were 521 students involved in fights. 77 of those individuals had two fight codes. In the 2023-24 school year YTD there have been 353 students involved in fights. 35 of those had two fights, six had more than two. That's kindergarten through twelfth grade.

**Mrs. Taulbee:** For middle school and high school if that occurs more than one time does the discipline go up? How many times before we say you can't come back here this year because you've consistently caused a problem in our building? Is the discipline given on top of that. Is the discipline given by the school supported or overturned? How often does that happen at CSO?

**Mr. Gehring:** At the middle school level your first occurrence of fighting is an automatic five day suspension. If it's assault it's an automatic 10 days or 10 days with a recommendation for expulsion. For a consensual fight the second fight is a 10 day suspension. The third, if there's a third, is automatically 10 days with a recommendation for expulsion. If you don't stop fighting when an adult intervenes, you automatically go up a level to at least 10 days. Things quickly go up. We're always evaluating placement for multiple offenders.

At the high school level your first fight is 10 days. Any additional fights that year, or any assault is automatically 10 days with a recommendation for expulsion. Then we always have a conversation about what it will look like if the kid can return and what do they need?

**Mr. Anthony Gaines (Asst. Principal, NWHS):** That's consistent with what we do. 10 days for a fight. They also get a disorderly conduct charge from the SRO where they have to go to diversionary court.

**Mrs. Taulbee:** Do we feel like most kids learn after one fight or does it seem to be these kids coming back for more right when they get back? I would think possibly the kids that are fighting are getting in trouble in other areas in school.

**Mr. Gaines:** I don't know that it's necessarily true that they're getting in trouble in other areas. It could've been something that happened in the neighborhood.

**Mr. Gehring:** If we do have a first time fighter that also has significant disciplinary concerns we can use repeat codes. In addition to the fight codes we can add in a repeat code and that helps tell the story. Allows administrators to go up a step, or two steps.

**Mr. Yater:** It's in the code of conduct that the administrators have the ability to skip levels based on the context of what's going on. While we have guidelines we follow, they have a lot of leeway individually when there's context with something that's bigger than that, to go farther than that. Anything farther than that would be a recommendation for expulsion.

**Mrs. Davis:** Two other things I would add in regards to Colerain High School. Any student that is involved in a fight does get a ban letter. We feel that additional things like that are a privilege so you get a ban letter and you can't attend extracurricular activities. In regards to any suspension for five or more days, upon return we have an intervention counselor that they have to meet with to try to reduce repeat offenses and support the student.

**Mrs. Taulbee:** Does that ban only apply during the suspension period?

**Mrs. Davis:** Once you're suspended you cannot go on any NWLSD property during that time. The ban is typically for a calendar year.

**Mr. Haws:** So if they get into a fight now they can't go to homecoming next year. And to add to that too. A lot of times when these students fight there's more stuff that happens over social media and they want to fight again. So as soon as they come back into the building we meet with those specific students. We'll call home and get the students together and try to mediate before another instance occurs at school.

**Mrs. McMullen:** In building relationships, students will share their concerns with you. So we often ask students to meet with the counselor first if they're struggling with a classmate and we'll try to mediate. The next step is to move to an administrator if we're getting into discipline and loop in the parents. Parents have been invited in with both parties that are in conflict to have mediation. We also have issued no contact letters so that the students can agree to disagree and not continue to pester one another. Those are some of the things we try to do on the proactive side.

- **Mrs. Taulbee:** If an administrator says this student has done this, this, and this and now we're at the point where they need to be expelled, what is the process? Are they taken at

their word because they're the expert or does it go through a process at CSO where they say well, we're going to do this instead. How does that work?

**Mr. Gehring:** In my seven years of doing this job I have yet to tell an administrator to reduce any discipline that they've issued. We've had conversations about increases where we've had to talk about the significance and that yes, we need to go up a step. For example maybe there was a 10 day suspension but we really need to have the conversation about a recommendation for expulsion. We have those conversations all the time. My principals call very often and we talk about that. We look at what we've done in the past and say "what do you think" and we land on a decision.

Sometimes it's firm and the only thing we can do is 10 days with a recommendation for expulsion.

**Mrs. Wessendorf:** For an out of school suspension that's given by the building, the only way that that's going to change is if a parent appeals that decision. That's the only way to do that for out of school. For expulsion you have a hearing and at the hearing you take the recommendation from the staff member and you hear both sides. You ask the staff if they stick by the recommendation and if so then an expulsion decision is made. But to my knowledge it doesn't go against what an administrator recommends. The appeal process could potentially reduce it.

**Mr. Yater:** As Erin (Wessendorf) mentioned parents have appeal processes at the suspension level and the expulsion level and that goes through a separate process. There could be the hearing officer who could look at it and say, from a due process or a standpoint of a code, we're going to look at that differently. But that's not coming from us (CSO), that's coming through an appeal process.

- **Mrs. Slattery:** I'm a little confused because to listen here it sounds like everything is sunshine and lollipops and everything's going in the right direction but to hear from parents from teachers and from staff at the schools that's not the case and to hear people in the community talk that's not the case so where is the disconnect?

**Mrs. Driesbach:** I think honestly the disconnect comes from not knowing. They might get a snippet of something that's happening and then that kind of trickles out into the community that that's what's happening all over the place when the reality is that was one incident in one time and one moment.

I think from a teacher perspective the needs of our students are greater than they have been. I have a more veteran staff and so their years of doing this job and being in education, they've seen a significant change in student needs. There's a lot more mental health issues going on with our students that we deal with now because of things that they're exposed to. Cell phones, what cell phones bring, the access students have to one another to consistently say and do things to one another that could be hurtful or harmful - and that's across any school. We are dealing with situations we've never had to before in

respect to what trauma the child's coming to us with. Those are situations that five or ten years ago we didn't experience to the level that we do now. Are we constantly reflecting on our practices and looking at how can we intervene? What interventions are out there? What supports do we need?

It's why we as Middle School principals get together on a regular basis to talk about, what are you doing over there? Have you seen an impact? Is it something we can incorporate here? It's an ongoing thing that we're constantly looking at and taking into consideration. How can we deploy our supports differently?

I feel with any profession it can feel overwhelming. There's a lot that we do as teachers. There's a lot that we do as administrators. I know that our teachers are feeling that it's a lot, but we're trying to figure out how to balance and what interventions we can put in place.

We looked at our operations - how are we dismissing kids, are there ways that we can do that differently to reduce the amount of occurrences that are happening? We're taking a more targeted focus on our data. What does it tell us? Because it does tell us a story, a story of what we need to do. It also tells us a story of what we're doing that's working.

That's something that is consistently happening, not just within our district, but elsewhere too. We're looking at higher needs that we have to address at a volume that's higher than it's been before, but not that there's a lack of consequences or discipline being issued.

The landscape of education looks a lot different than it did before. I think as we grow and develop and look at what our needs are, and we have those conversations we're just going to get better and stronger.

- **Mrs. Slattery:** There are some studies that suggest that social emotional learning has increased the mental health problems among students and suicide risk among students. That's part of Northwest's program, social emotional learning. Some of the awareness of all of this has caused some increased mental health issues.

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** Oh, I've not seen that research. From my experience in working with students that's not been my experience. Helping them with those coping strategies, finding ways to help them advocate, helping them identify what that need is has been a huge benefit to reducing some of the outbursts. They now recognize their emotional state and knowing this about myself and being able to use these strategies and tools you've now provided me, I'm able to handle this in a way that doesn't result in a behavior discipline. It's actually been very productive with helping support the child and being able to give them the tools and the resources they need and the strategies to be able to effectively have a conversation with a peer that would have once resulted in a fight. It now results in a conversation because that's a valuable tool that they have and being able to teach them.



- **Mrs. Slattery:** Are there any teachers here to give testimony as to how they feel restorative practices are working in their classrooms and if they're taking away from any academic learning time? Because I've also seen some studies that suggest restorative practices take away some of the classroom time for teaching and that some of the academics have fallen since restorative learning has started.

**Mrs. Sansone:** I can speak about preschool, those are our standards. Those are exactly what we should be teaching. If you look up early childhood developmental standards for ages three to four, social emotional is embedded within that.

**Mrs. Slattery:** Yeah, those are young kids, but by the time you're getting into elementary school and middle school and high school where is the parents' responsibility for this and why are we taking this on in a school system? We have to teach things that parents should be teaching, and religious society should be teaching the kids. Why are we making this almost a subject in school rather than concentrating on math, social studies, science, language arts, which is what school was supposed to teach. Are we trying to become a social work situation?

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** Honestly I feel like our job as educators is to educate the whole child. That's more than just...

**Mrs. Slattery:** But is everybody equipped to do that? People don't all have psychology degrees.

**Mrs. Driesbach:** You don't need a psychology degree to teach that.

**Mrs. Slattery:** We have a psychologist here (Mr. Heather), do you think people framing people's minds need to have some psychology training?

**Mr. Heather:** You mentioned the religious component, when I went to Monfort Heights Elementary school every kid in the class went to Sunday school. When you look at culture today I bet you in that in a class of 25 kids, I bet you there's not three that go to Sunday school.

**Mrs. Taulbee:** That really doesn't have anything to do with this.

**Mr. Heather:** Well, she mentioned it. Another thing, maybe I'm living in the past but we'd have maybe one kid who was new, leave or come every year in the class. Now, I don't know what the numbers are, but I hear sometimes a kid will move two or three times in a year. The culture has just changed and declined for whatever reason so greatly.

I have a friend who retired from Monfort Heights Elementary as a teacher. She put in 35 years in this district and she said the problems in her opinion, and what egged her on to retire was the cell phones. When those were introduced that's when she saw the real decline in behavior. I have patients, I work in psychiatry, I have patients who are addicted to these things - one girl who says she spends 12 hours a day on the cell phone and she's a

college educated young woman. She can't control it. I find myself checking the news or scores. It's just a cultural thing.

- **Mr. Yater:** I will say one thing to kind of frame social emotional from a school perspective, because it is part of the state framework around the whole child framework from the Department of Education.

**Mrs. Slattery:** Right, it's recommended but not required.

**Mr. Yater:** But part of what we use as social emotional is around preparing students to learn. It's around how do you maintain positive healthy relationships? How do you resolve conflict? How do you manage emotions? We're trying to address the needs that we see in the students around behavior management strategies from that social emotional lens. What do you need in order to be successful in the learning environment? How to take turns, how to ask appropriately, how to do these things that are necessary for the academic environment. That's the social emotional envelope we live within. Not necessarily some of the personal beliefs and other things like that. That's definitely a family/home perspective. It's more about the skills and the soft skills you need in order to be not just a student now, but a citizen and employee later.

- **Mrs. Slattery:** Are there any teachers here to give their perspective? Because these people are all administrators, and you do a great job, but the teachers are the ones who are on the ground in the classrooms every day dealing with these kids and implementing these things.

**Mr. Yater:** There are two teachers here tonight.

**Mrs. Slattery:** Because I specifically know a teacher who told me that the discipline's horrible and this isn't working. He's been with the district for a long time, that's why I question it. Because everything sounds beautiful here but that's not the perspective that you hear out in the community, and somewhere there's a disconnect. Either we're not communicating well or there's something going on that we're not aware of and we're not discussing.

**Mr. Yater:** What our staff is dealing with on a daily basis are greater. We have more supports now than we ever have - and do we have every support needed for every situation all the time? There's still things that are happening in buildings that are exhausting and we still have needs as a society, and as a school that you know they're dealing with on a daily basis.

I think one of the things that we're hearing is this narrative around our schools that gets propagated from social media because people take one incidence and they overgeneralize it. I think if you ask, and I'm not going to speak for anyone in this room, but I believe our buildings are safe, conducive learning environments. Do we have things that we're dealing with on a daily basis? Absolutely. Do we have students with needs on a daily basis? Absolutely. Are teachers dealing with things coming out of a pandemic and a

society that's different than it was five, ten years ago? Absolutely, and so I think those are the things that we continue to try to every year collaborate and talk about.

How do we address that moving forward? That's an ongoing conversation, I'd love to talk to the person who said that it's that bad. The buildings are talking to their teachers on a daily basis, if they feel it's that bad what additional support do you need? I think they have a good pulse on their buildings. They know what's going on and they're on the front line of that conversation. I would hope that any staff member in this District who feels like they're struggling has that administrative presence in their building and a relationship with the people sitting around this table to reach out to and say I need help.

**Mr. Gaines:** I'd just like to add at Northwest High School, I'm rounding numbers here, we have about 850 kids in our building, 830 of them are coming to school every day, doing it right. It's those outliers that aren't doing things right, they're the outliers. Fighting, that's the outlier. That's not a norm in our schools. Those other 830 kids don't want that in their school. They're doing it the right way. They're being the example. They're letting us know where we need to head things off. They're going into the classrooms and they're advocating for themselves, but they're also holding their classmates accountable for behaviors. 830 of them come to school every day doing it right.

- **Mrs. Weathers:** You talked about the communication disconnect - I think one of the very common things I run into when we discipline students is that the families always want to know what happened to the other kid. "Well, did you do that to the other kid?" and our response is always, "I can't share with you what I did to this other student" and I really do believe that that message "well, they didn't do anything to that other kid" is because they didn't get the information. But we're not allowed to give that information. So I think some of that disconnect comes from, they think they should know everything but they can't, and that's uncomfortable, and they don't like it.

**Mrs. Casteel:** I think that it's important too that we consider that not everyone has an administrative disciplinary background, even our teachers. They are coming to work to teach our students. Parents may have feelings about what they think should happen but legally, we had a conversation tonight where we re-clarified what the law says, we cannot just say this student cannot return to school. And I get the impression glancing at social media when I do that that's what the desired outcome is. Remove the children. We can't do that, but that's not their job to understand. Their job is to show up to work to teach. So sometimes just taking the time to have the conversation about what we are legally able to do is important as well.

- **Mrs. Grote:** I also think it's important to think about the circle of control and the circle of care. Of course we care deeply about what's happening to them. When they're outside of our buildings there's cases where we wish something different was happening. I think I spoke about that relationship piece and building relationships with families because it's only in relationships that anything changes. We have to take them where they are and do

everything to help empower them to control their own circumstances. If we can all get on the same page that's where real progress can happen. Yes, there are negative things happening and those things are real, but it's not the whole story. There are a lot of really great, positive things happening in this district and I wish those things were talked about too.

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** There are a lot of positive things that happened this week and I haven't seen any of that in the news. It would be really good if those were the things that got talked about, and that was the narrative people shared rather than just the negative.

- **Mr. Yater:** Going back to the disconnect you mentioned, sometimes a staff member writes a referral about what might have happened in their room or what they witnessed. It goes to an administrator who then does an investigation and issues consequences on the backside, and the consequences on the backside may not be what that staff member thought should have happened. I've heard from staff members who are frustrated in the fact that they saw the beginning of something and then they saw the end of it and they didn't know the middle and they felt like there was a disconnect.

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** I have an open door policy so they can come at any time to say, hey so-and-so got this consequence, can you help me understand why. A lot of times when they see the explanation behind it through the investigation that we conducted and the due process that the child deserves, they have a better understanding as to why. That's why we have the code of conduct in place and that progressive level to kind of show, this is what we do for these situations.

**Mr. Climer:** On the flip side we have a number of teachers and staff that advocate for the students to the nth degree. They want to keep those students in class and use calming areas and other strategies to help keep kids in the classroom.

- **Mr. Gilbert:** What's a calming area?

**Mr. Climer:** Part of the room where kids can go and get a reset without leaving the classroom.

- **Mr. Gilbert:** Where do we draw the line? Where does the line get drawn before you spend so much time, and I'm not saying children are not worth it, I'm not saying that at all but where do you draw a line? That you put so much effort and energy into the soft skills that it takes away from the other kids in the class. I guess my question is does it take away from the other kids?

**Mrs. Sansone:** I'm hearing you earlier ask for more deans, correct? Across the board you guys want more deans. Our deans are people that apply support, it's not just our teachers that we're talking about. You have support staff in our schools that also provide education. So I hear the Board saying we want deans, we want deans, but these are the same exact people that would be providing this teaching to our students that I also hear the Board say I don't really agree with. I don't know that I can look at a kid and say this is

the line. I don't know that there's a straight answer for me, I can't give you an answer for that.

**Mrs. Slattery:** If you're filling that bucket so full because you're spending that much time with that kid are you not filling these other kids' buckets because you've spent so much time over here? Every kid needs their bucket full no matter what their needs are. There may be different things that they need in their bucket but they need their bucket full.

**Mrs. Dreisbach:** Every student has different needs at different times. We're not taking away from other kids.

- **Mr. Gilbert:** I know we have a lot of veteran teachers. This process is very different from when I went to school. You guys are speaking a completely different language. Some of it I understand because I've worked in behavioral health so I'm picking up on bits and pieces of it, but how are the teachers doing? We've got an app that they have to document on and we have all these other things, how do you ensure that there's not teacher fatigue through all of this? How do you give them the B12 in the arm to keep them motivated?

**Brad Watkins (Director of Special Education):** There's no easy solution to a complicated problem. We're not seeing as many people enter the field but the ones that are here are built different. It's a tough position, it's difficult, it's a grind. They're passionate and it's not about the money. They're in it for these kids and this community.

**Mr. Gilbert:** I'll back you up on that. My daughter wants to go into education and I could try for a million years to talk her out of it but it would never work.

**Mr. Gehring:** My daughter wants to go into education as well and I want her to know what it feels like to get those wins with the kids. I have told her I'm incredibly proud of you because this work is incredibly difficult and you're not going to make a lot of money. But I promise you it's worth it because you get the wins. Our teachers need to hear that we love them and support them. To keep pushing them along we need to support them, the solution isn't to remove the problems. The answer is supporting, loving and encouraging them.

**Mr. Yater:** One of the things I think our teachers are feeling is that as a public entity there's a lot of legislative oversight and so we hear from our teachers all the time, "oh my God it's one more thing" and they're right. Legislators are adding one more thing all the time and there's no money to go with. Our teachers are feeling overwhelmed and it's legit and it's not just their day-to-day tasks, it's what's being piled on from everyone else. Every single person who works for this district should be commended for the service that they are doing. They don't hear it enough from people outside of this system that they are valued for the work they're doing and the rewards that the community is going to reap on the back end for the high quality of graduates that they're going to get.

- **Mr. Heather:** Things have changed a lot since I was in school and there may be a disconnect between my generation and younger teachers. I never saw a single fight, never

saw one marijuana cigarette and the teachers carried around paddles. The bureaucracy now has changed things and things are different. The culture has changed a lot and I for one just can't put my fingers on the spaces in classrooms. If I had tried that at Colerain High School in 1974 they'd have thrown me out the window.

**Mr. Watkins:** It's a lot more inclusive now. Those kids used to go to a different space, you didn't see them at your school, they weren't in your building. We've progressed and now it's every kid, every day. It's inclusive.

**Mr. Heather:** I've been on the board four terms and it's just, it's different when I first got on than it is now.

- **Mr. Berry:** You asked about how we can give teachers that B12 shot, my B12 shot is seeing the students succeed. Seeing that student who had difficulties and it took everything we had to keep them on track and now they're in middle school playing basketball and getting good grades. It's seeing the high school student graduate, go to college and become a productive member of society. We don't get the money or the fame but those kids that come back and they're successful and you think of all the people that put the time and effort in to help that kid become where they are today, that's it right there.

**Mr. Gilbert:** I want to make sure our teachers and administrators are taking the time to make emotional deposits and celebrate the successes amongst ourselves.

**Mrs. Stephens:** I would encourage all of you and everyone in the community to come into our buildings and see the successes for yourself. Nothing fills our buckets more than seeing that community support. Stop listening to all the negativity and come see the kids, see the calming corner, volunteer to read. We need everyone's support.

**Mr. Scherz:** It's hard, everyday it's hard, but I love coming to work at Taylor everyday and working with the kids. Teaching the kids how to advocate for themselves.

**Mrs. Sansone:** Some teachers are experiencing trauma as well. They come to school with their own baggage. It's tiring and sometimes they break but we're all there for each other and support each other.

**Mr. Yater:** They're humans and they bring their whole self to work everyday. They bring their work home with them everyday. Teachers are going the extra mile for their kids. It can create secondary trauma for these teachers.

**Mr. Gilbert:** No one advocates for teachers more than me. I have volunteered and rode buses and observed in the schools. I just know that there has to be a balance. The teachers have to be fully charged to create that environment. I want to see our academics raised but to do that we need our teachers to be at their best.

**Mr. Yater:** It's a draining profession and teachers are always working on themselves emotionally. They need to take the time to recharge. To an outsider it looks like teachers get a lot of time off but they're always working on themselves during those days off.

**Mrs. Lori Riehle (Asst. Director of Curriculum):** As someone not far removed from being a principal I can say that I always found finding that balance to be the hardest part. As administrators we're always worried about our teachers and staff and trying to figure out what can I take off their plates. It weighs on all of us and it's difficult to do it all. What we do matters and we need to celebrate successes.

- **Mr. Heather:** There are so many moving pieces now and the internet can make things so much harder. I was a teacher a long time ago but I don't think what you're experiencing now is anything like what I experienced teaching at a private school 40 years ago. I don't think it's even close.

**Mr. Gilbert:** I appreciate everyone coming and having all the players in the room at the same time. We're here to support you 100%. We are on the outside looking in but we want to understand.

**Mr. Yater:** Thank you to everyone for engaging in the conversation and to the Board for being willing to be a part of it and listen. We have amazing administrators, teachers and staff and we should be proud. They're true leaders who I respect immensely. We should have confidence in the decisions coming out of the people around this table. Thank you for the open and honest conversation.

**Mrs. Taulbee:** I want to thank everyone for being here. Nobody speaks higher of what you're doing than me. You do such a great job at building those relationships and I appreciate hearing from all of you. We're not giving up on the kids, we're helping them find their next achievement. Please don't get discouraged. We appreciate everything you guys do. I would encourage everyone at this table to get to a school and see the great things going on.

## **5.0 ADJOURNMENT**

### **5.1 Board President Called for Adjournment**

The Board President asked for a motion and second for adjournment.

#### **ORIGINAL - Motion**

Member **(Mark Gilbert)** Moved, Member **(Jim Detzel)** Seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion 'The Board President recommends to adopt the agenda as presented'. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **5** Nay: **0**. The motion **Carried 5 - 0**

Nicole Taulbee	Yes
Mark Gilbert	Yes
Jim Detzel	Yes
Chris Heather	Yes
Nancy Slattery	Yes

**The meeting ended at 9:23 PM.**

Agenda item attachments are saved in PDF format and are viewable by the public. Waycross community media video tapes Board meetings. Taped meetings are available on-line at [www.waycross.tv](http://www.waycross.tv)

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**President**

**Attest**

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**Treasurer**