



Tri County Area Schools  
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## TRI COUNTY AREA SCHOOLS

### Regular Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2024

**CALL TO ORDER:** President Fennessy called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m., with all members. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. President Fennessy welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Motion by Princer, second by Arnold to approve the agenda as presented. Motion CARRIED (7-0-0)

**GOOD THINGS:** President Fennessy began the “Good Things” portion of the meeting by welcoming new board member, Jessica Helfmann, who was participating her first board meeting. Mrs. Fennessy then welcomed new superintendent, Ryan Biller, and presented him with a welcome gift from the Board. She then turned the meeting over to Superintendent Biller

Superintendent Biller shared that January is School Board Appreciation month and read a proclamation from Governor Whitmer in support of all that our local school boards do. On behalf of the TC Education Association, members Wendy Kik and Brandon Briggs offered appreciation for the working relationship that exists between the EA and the board. They gifted the board with an ariel picture of the entire school campus off Kendaville road.

### PRESENTATIONS

**Building Report – Middle School:** Principal, Joe Williams, was present and introduced Dave VanOver, new Assistant Principal at the Middle School. Together they presented information regarding fall MAP testing, discipline, and culture. Fall MAP scores reveal in Math (Median Percentile) 6<sup>th</sup> grade at 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, 7<sup>th</sup> grade at the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile, 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile, with an overall median percentile in Math of 36. In Reading (Median Percentile) 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the 40 percentile, 7<sup>th</sup> grade at the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile, with an overall percentile in Reading of 38, and in Language Usage (Median Percentile) 6<sup>th</sup> grade of 38<sup>th</sup> percentile, 7<sup>th</sup> grade 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile, with an overall score for Language Usage at the 38<sup>th</sup> percentile. Initiatives for improvement include identifying 10 students per grade level and documenting specific interventions, focusing on improving student engagement in lessons, implantation of a new IXL Math program to support curriculum to identify student areas of need, creation of a Math academic support class, continued implementation of ELA curriculum, creation of an alternative schedule for students who struggle in a normal classroom setting, and provide staff professional development as needed.

In the area of discipline, tardies have seen a decrease this year, while cases of insubordination have increased. Interventions being implemented to address this include behavior plans/incentives, TRAILS program, Check In/Check Out, Lunch groups with mental health team, and others. Something new to the Middle School is the SRSS (Student risk Screening Scale), which is used to identify students with externalizing and internalizing problems.

Several new programs have been implemented this year, including the High School Athlete Mentor program, National Jr. Honor Society, Making It Cool To Be Kind, and be nice.

**High School Transformer Purchase:** Tom Phinney, Facilities Director, shared information regarding the purchase of a new transformer for the high school. As the Board is aware, the transformer has been leaking for quite some time, and the district has been monitoring it using thermal imaging every month to make sure it isn't overheating. The district looked at replacing the transformer in March 2022, when the purchase price was \$90,000 and did not include shipping or installation. Mr. Phinney presented new current pricing at a cost of \$66,325, which includes shipping and installation. He is recommending we move forward at this time with the purchase since there is a 43-week lead time on getting the transformer. Monies for this purchase will come out of sinking fund dollars. Payment will not need to be made until next year at the time of purchase/installation.

**Policy Second Reading:** Member Bice provided the second reading overview for policies from the November 2023 Neola Special Update, which included 0122-Board Powers, 1420-School Administrator Evaluation, 3120-Employment of Professional Staff, 3130-Assignment & Transfer, 3131-Staff Reductions-Recalls, 3132-Vacancies, 3139-Staff Discipline, 3140-Termination & Resignations, 3142-Probationary Teachers, and 3220-Professional Staff Evaluations. This special update aligns with the substantive changes made by the legislature to the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA), as well as related changes to the Revised School Code.

### **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Finance Committee:** Member Campbell shared that the committee met just prior to tonight's meeting, where they reviewed the transformer purchase information, State Aid Financial status, and the monthly district financial overview/checklist. He commented that this process is working and keeps us on track. Next meeting is February 12, 2024.

**Operations Committee:** Member Arnold shared that the committee had met on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, where they received information on the transformer purchase, repair of the stage floor at the high school, elementary gym floor repair, new transit van that is now in service, buses that will be going up for sale, and safety and security work ongoing with Codenity, who provides our emergency response plans, etc.

**Policy Committee:** Member Bice reported that the committee also met on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, where they read and reviewed the policies presented earlier this evening. He also shared that the change in meeting day is not permanent, as the committee will continue to meet monthly as needed prior to the Board workshops.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:** Superintendent Biller shared a few comments, stating that the positivity in the district is infectious, and he will continue to get his feet wet. He has observed the commitment of staff in our district, and he is so excited to be here. He will be taking part in Instructional Rounds tomorrow with administrators.

**FOLLOW-UP TO PRIOR PUBLIC COMMENT:** Superintendent Biller shared that the district had consulted legal counsel regarding last month's public comment regarding policy. The policy follows State statutes and there is no requirement to change policy.

**PUBLIC COMMENT – Agenda Items:** No one spoke to this

### **ACTION ITEMS**

**Action Item # 1 - Consent Agenda.** Motion by Arnold, second by Helfmann to approve the consent agenda as presented, which includes Minutes from the December 11, 2023 Regular Meeting, New Hires: Sara Smith-Elementary Speech & Language, Shawn Burnett-Paraprofessional, Nancy Best-Paraprofessional, Aaron Johnson-Paraprofessional, , and Accounts Payable of: \$708,305.36. Motion CARRIED (7-0-0)

**Action Item #2 – HS Transformer Purchase.** Motion by Princer, second by Campbell to approve the purchase of a Transformer for the High School as presented Facilities Director, Tom Phinney, and recommended by the BOE Facilities Committee and Superintendent Biller. Motion CARRIED (7-0-0)

**Action Item #3 – Policy Adoption.** Motion by Campbell, second by Bice to approve the adoption of policies #s 0122, 1420, 3120, 3130, 3131, 3132, 3139, 3140, 3142, 3220 as read.  
Motion CARRIED (7-0-0)

**PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL COMMENTS:**

A member of the audience addressed the board sharing they had been before the board a few times regarding the board policy regarding immunization waivers. Information shared was in regards to the exemption forms used, both actual and an exemption statement provided by the audience member.

**BOARD COMMENTS:** No comments were shared

**CLOSED SESSION – For the Purpose of a Student Hearing.** Motion by Powell, second by Campbell to go into Closed Session at 6:51 p.m. for the purpose of a student hearing. Roll Call Vote: Arnold-Aye, Helfmann-Aye, Princer-Aye, Bice-Aye, Campbell-Aye, Powell-Aye, Fennessy-Aye.  
Motion CARRIED (7-0-0)

The Board returned to Open Session at 7:19 p.m.

Motion by Bice, second by Princer to expel student A for the remainder of the 2023-2024 school year, as recommended by District Administration. Motion CARRIED (4-0-3)

**CLOSED SESSION – Pending Litigation.** Motion by Bice, second by Princer that the Board meet in closed session under section 8(c) of the Open Meetings Act, to consult with our attorney regarding trial or settlement strategy in connection with the case Antor vs Tri County Area Schools. Roll Call Vote: Arnold-Aye, Helfmann-Aye, Princer-Aye, Bice-Aye, Campbell-Aye, Powell-Aye, Fennessy-Aye.  
Motion CARRIED (7-0-0)

The Board returned to Open Session at 8:24 p.m.

**ADJOURMENT:** Motion by Powell, second by Campbell to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.  
Motion CARRIED (7-0-0)

Approved by:

Jill Fennessy, President

Chad Bice, Acting Secretary

