



**Fort Edward Union Free School District  
Regular Meeting of the Board of Education  
December 11, 2023 6:00pm  
Board of Education Minutes**

**Members Present:** Ella Collins, John Guglielmo, Timothy Clark, Audra Aul, Sarah Buschynski

**Members Absent:** Thomas Roche, Taylor Boucher

**Others Present:** Richard DeMallie, Keaysie Ferguson, Christopher Rayder, Erin Russo, Steve Neron, Greg Weeks, Dominic D’Imperio, Colleen Ulrich

**I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Ella Collins called the meeting to order at 6:04pm

**II. Acceptance of the Agenda**

Motion made by Timothy Clark, seconded by John Guglielmo to accept the agenda as presented.  
Motion carried 5-0.

**III. Executive Session**

Motion made by Timothy Clark, seconded by John Guglielmo to enter into Executive Session at 6:57pm. Motion carried 5-0.

**IV. Return to Public Session**

Motion made by Audra Aul, seconded by John Guglielmo to return to Public Session at 7:02pm.  
Motion carried 5-0.

**V. Special Recognition**

A. Irving Tissue: Donation of 80 cases of paper towels

B. Burgoyne Quality Hardware and Lumber: Donation of building materials to the technology classroom who will be constructing a bed for a student in need

1. Richard DeMallie thanked Ryan Herman for spearheading this project and obtaining the materials.

**VI. Community Comments:**

Ella Collins read the following: A public comment period not to exceed thirty (30) minutes each shall be provided at each business meeting. In an effort to provide an opportunity for all interested speakers, all speakers shall be limited to three (3) minutes during the public comment period. Community members, who wish to address the Board, are requested to complete the speaker request form and submit it to the Clerk of the Board prior to the meeting. Comments regarding agenda items will be taken first. Speakers are reminded of the three-minute time limit. Should the 30 minute time limit expire additional written comments may be taken prior to the meeting's adjournment. A member of the Board or the Superintendent will respond that the BOE received and reviewed the comments.

When members of the public speak to the Board, they shall state their name and address, the name of the organization (if any) which they represent, and the agenda item they wish to comment on. Please



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be aware that by law individual student information or particular personnel issues cannot be discussed at public sessions of the board. The Board will not permit interruptions, slanderous remarks or “name-calling” by speakers or the audience. We take public comment very seriously and careful notes will be taken. However, the board generally does not respond while the meeting is in public session.

Megan Muñoz, residing at 8 Chestnut Street, addressed the board inquiring about a follow up regarding sports options for her children, who are enrolled in private school. Richard DeMallie took her phone number and stated that he would discuss it with Thomas Roche, who was not in attendance, and follow up with her. He could not recall who was supposed to reach out to her and could not recall the result of his and Mr. Roche’s previous discussion on the matter.

**VII. Presentations**

A. Special Education Audit - Colleen Ulrich presented a powerpoint with key points of the full report

1. Purpose of Review

- a) To assess the processes, procedures and program effectiveness of Student Support Services, with a focus on special education

2. Strengths

- a) Great deal of support from BOE, Superintendent and administrators for the review
- b) The staff were welcoming and very forthcoming in sharing their thoughts with the Consultant.
- c) The District has caring staff that are passionate about their students. The school is “very community oriented.”
- d) This year the District introduced The Positivity Project (PreK-12) which has been welcomed by faculty and staff.

3. Concerns

- a) There is an absence of well-known or commonly understood District goals and processes or procedures that provide strategic and guided direction to all stakeholders.
- b) There is a lack of communication and fractured relationships within the District.
- c) There is no clearly defined continuum of special education services which leads to confusion in programs/services, class size, etc.
- d) There is a lack of a data-driven culture in which the school collects and analyzes data to determine what students learn and what changes need to be made to instruction to drive academic excellence.

4. Data Analysis

- a) While the District’s enrollment continues to decline, the classification rate continues to show an upward trend (Note: 2022-23 enrollment decreased from 406 to 368 and the classification rate increased from 18.2% to 19%)
- b) During the 2020-21 school year, the 4-year graduation rate in August 2021 was 72% for all students with a State rate of 86%. The graduation rate for Students with Disabilities was 60% (3 out of 5 students).



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- c) During the 2021-2022 school year, only 32.4% of SWDs received services for the majority of the day in general education classes. The State target was >58.25%.
- d) During the 2021-2022 school year, 21.6% of SWDs received services outside of FE in separate schools/settings. The State target was <5.1 %
- e) It was reported that the dropout rate for all students during the 2021-22 school year was 7% as compared to the NYS rate of 5%.
- f) 3-8 ELA and MATH ASSESSMENTS
  - (1) There is still a preponderance that the majority of ALL students (including students with disabilities) are scoring at Level 1 and 2 on the 3-8 ELA and Math Assessments.
  - (2) For the past 3 years, Fort Edward students have been below the average NYS scores in both ELA and Math.
  - (3) The ELA proficiency rate for all students in Grades 3-8 has continually declined for the past 3 years (44%, 41%, 30%).
  - (4) The Math proficiency rate for all students in Grades 3-8 has increased slightly for the past 3 years (29%, 32%, 34%)
  - (5) There is a significant gap between the proficiency of SWDs and that of general education students in both ELA and Math.

**5. Additional Findings**

- a) Programs/Services and Processes/Procedures
  - (1) The District offers related services, Resource Room, DCT, and 12:1:1 special class programs, but they are not vertically aligned or available in all grades K-12.
  - (2) There appears to be limited types of special education programs/services for students pursuing a diploma in Grades 9-12 other than Resource Room and push-in TA support.
  - (3) Little to no remedial supports are available to secondary level students.
- b) Processes/Procedures
  - (1) Lack of communication and/or well-known written processes, procedures, and protocols within buildings and district-wide for continuity, known expectations, sustainability, and appropriate student support services (IST, MTSS, Special Education Procedures, etc.)
  - (2) Lack of criteria for the delivery of services using data resulting in placements being made based on program availability of programs, staff, and teacher schedules at each level rather than on students' needs. May result in inefficiencies, misplacements, and higher costs to sustain services.
- c) Teaching and Learning
  - (1) There appears to be an overall lack of urgency by the majority of staff to improve the teaching and learning of students.
  - (2) Concerns exist with both the ELA and Math K-8 Curriculum and Instruction in the District as the NYS Assessments in Grades 3-8 show



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that more than half (50%) of the student population is not meeting proficiency.

- (3) There is a lack of appropriate and effective district-wide support for students prior to referral to special education using AIS/RtI/MTSS processes and procedures with data driven decision making.
- (4) Data does not appear to be used on a consistent basis as a means to improve the teaching and learning of students.
- (5) Staff are often resistant to the data collection process and/or are unsure of what data is required. As a result, struggling students are often referred to special education, as it appears to be “the only game in town”. This leads to higher classification rates and more out of district placements.
- (6) A little more than half of the classrooms visited revealed that the teacher was doing all the work and often teaching to the whole group. Classroom instruction often lacked rigor. Student engagement was low. There was little evidence of differentiation, collaborative teaching strategies, or work based learning activities to motivate the students and engage them in their own learning.

**6. Recommendations**

- a) Create and embrace a sense of urgency to respond to the current and longitudinal data and adjust teaching and learning of students in FE.
- b) Establish a data-driven culture within the District to make decisions regarding entry and exit from programs and services for AIS/RtI and special education to respond specifically to students’ needs.
- c) Improve communication regarding processes and procedures district-wide.
- d) Examine the staffing patterns and programs in order to realign staff to better meet the needs of students in both an effective and efficient manner. [Psychologist, Literacy Coach, additional special education teachers at the HS, etc.]
- e) Provide professional development in the following areas
  - (1) Data (Gathering, analyzing, and applying results to drive instruction)
  - (2) Tier I, II, and III intervention strategies
  - (3) Center-based/small group instruction vs. whole group instruction
  - (4) Direct Explicit Instruction/ Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)
  - (5) Differentiation and scaffolding strategies
  - (6) Teaching and supporting reading in the content areas
  - (7) Collaborative teaching strategies
  - (8) Disability Awareness
  - (9) Test accommodations and modification

**7. Summary**

- a) The Fort Edward Union Free School District has an opportunity to develop a collaborative team of administrators and teachers that are focused on improving the achievement for all students.



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- b) It is imperative that all students have access to a rigorous curriculum using data to inform instructional programming and efficient resource allocation to meet their academic and behavioral needs.
- c) The issues faced by the District are not solely those related to special education. In fact, they are closely and intrinsically related to the instructional practices for all students.

**VIII. Reports:**

**A. Board Committee Reports**

1. Budget, Finance and Audit Committee

a) Met tonight

- (1) Christopher Rayder provided information from meeting with administrators and supervisors
- (2) Budget workshop #1 scheduled for 1/8/24

2. Personnel, Grievance and Negotiations Committee

a) Need to schedule a meeting

3. Policy Review Committee

a) Need to schedule a meeting

4. Athletic Committee

a) Met 12/6/23 - notes included in board packets

- (1) Fully staffed for basketball
- (2) Hoping to get more merger opportunities with Hudson Falls
- (3) Tardy to school/missing practice and/or a game recommendation from committee

(a) Students can participate in practice or game if they arrive after 8am but before end of 2nd period (10:19) if they provide a legal excuse that coincides with student code of conduct. After 3 unexcused tardies (per season), student will not be able to participate and student will receive a tardy.

(b) Students can participate in practice or game if they arrive after 8am but before end of 1st period (8:51) if they provide a legal excuse that coincides with student code of conduct. After 3 unexcused tardies (per season), student will not be able to participate and student will receive a tardy.

(c) Status quo

- (4) Parent sign-out for away games policy = discussion on the “extenuating circumstances of this policy”

5. Capital Project Committee

a) Scheduled for 12/20

**B. Superintendent Report**



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1. Staff vacancies
  - a) Secondary Spanish Teacher, hoping to get new graduate application in May
  - b) Speech and Language Pathologist posted through 12/15
  - c) Director of Pupil Services posted through 12/15
  - d) Full-Time Cleaner posted through 12/22
2. Capital Project
  - a) Still tweaking that
  - b) Priority #1 items are currently up to \$17.4 million
  - c) Will need to decide if we want to raise the amount or chop/slash items
3. Rebranding/Capital Project Marketing = looking to put a selected candidate before board in January
4. Athletics
  - a) Created a dual sport contract
  - b) Looking at policy change regarding tardy to school and parent sign out, discussion to commence during athletic committee report
5. DLL upgrades next week
6. Two half day Superintendent Conferences scheduled (students dismissed at 11:15am) = 2/16 and 3/28

**C. Building Principal Report**

1. Positivity Project assemblies are continuing
2. Last month we had a special guest at elementary P2 assembly, author Eileen Doyon, and News Channel 6 came
3. 1st Quarter P2 assembly for junior/high school = Honor Roll, high honor roll, honorable mention, and students with good character nominated to be P2 student of the quarter
4. 2/6 = Special Event for students with no referrals and less than 2 absences
5. 12/12 = Chorus Concert
6. 12/19 = Band Concert
7. Attendance
  - a) 92.7% since day one
  - b) All grades are 90% or better
  - c) Five grades with 95% or better for the year
8. 12/18-12/22 = Spirit Week
9. Still working with Amanda Bergin on the data requests
10. Working with BOCES to explore a new math series
11. Wait House talked to Jr/Sr High Faculty regarding homelessness
12. PPS Meeting met with Catholic Charities regarding SNAP, they will also provide information to students who qualify for backpack program and table at Operation Santa Claus

**D. Pupil Services Report - None**

**E. Building Maintenance Report**

1. Electrical issues = investigating with Brownell Electric to potentially trace these issues
2. Working with Stark Tech regarding controls that have not worked properly in a long time
3. Working on DLL room univent



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4. Trying to balance the workload while missing a full-time cleaner and hoping to fill that vacant position

**IX. Discussion Items**

**A. Tax Exemption for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers**

1. Could offer a residential property tax exemption of up to ten percent (10%) of the assessed value of such property for volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers (“volunteers”) who live in the county served by their volunteer organization.
2. Interested in seeing what other schools are doing as well as the Village of Fort Edward.
3. General consensus is that the board would be interested in moving forward with this

**X. Consent Agenda**

*Although Board action is required, it is generally unnecessary to hold discussion on these items. With the consent of all members, they are therefore grouped and approval is given in one motion. In the event a Board member wants to discuss any item, it is moved to an appropriate place on the agenda.*

Motion made by John Guglielmo, seconded by Audra Aul to approve items A-G. Motion carried 5-0.

- A. Approve the minutes for the Board Meeting held November 13, 2023.
- B. Approve the minutes for the Special Board Meeting held November 17, 2023.
- C. Approve the minutes for the Athletic Committee Meeting held December 6, 2023.
- D. Approve the Treasurer Reports for November as included in the Board packets.
- E. Approve the Budget Transfers for November as included in the Board packets.
- F. Approve the Warrants and Claims for November as included in the Board packets.
- G. Approve the CSE/CPSE Recommendations for November as included in the Board packets.

**XI. Action:**

Motion made by John Guglielmo, seconded by Audra Aul to approve items A-I. Motion carried 5-0.

- A. Approve the football merger for all levels between the Fort Edward UFSD and Hudson Falls CSD for the 2024-2025 school year.
- B. Approve the soccer merger for all levels between the Fort Edward UFSD and Argyle CSD for the 2024-2025 school year.
- C. Approve the golf merger for all levels between the Fort Edward UFSD and Argyle CSD for the 2024-2025 school year.
- D. Approve the cross country merger for all levels between the Fort Edward UFSD and Argyle CSD for the 2024-2025 school year.
- E. Approve the contract with Standard Medical Testing Services, a division of Mountain Medical, to provide required medical screenings for specific employees effective January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023.
- F. Approve the disposal of the fixed assets as listed in the board packets.



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G. Approve the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District desires to authorize the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES to enter into a three (3) year lease in order to furnish certain services to the District pursuant to Education Law 1950(4)(jj), those services being: CoSer 504 Instructional Technology Services.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District authorizes the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES to lease 80 Chromebooks, on the District's behalf, for the provision of said services to the District not to exceed \$34,358.67 with three (3) payments of \$11,452.89 (subject to a 2% increase in interest rates) plus related borrowing fees, plus yearly support and coordination fees during the term of this lease, subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Education, for a period of three (3) years; 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26.

H. Approve the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District desires to authorize the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES to enter into a four (4) year lease in order to furnish certain services to the District pursuant to Education Law 1950(4)(jj), those services being: CoSer 504 Instructional Technology Services.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District authorizes the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES to lease 65 Desktop Computer, on the District's behalf, for the provision of said services to the District not to exceed \$55,087.36 with four (4) payments of \$13,771.84 (subject to a 2% increase in interest rates) (Disposition is \$1 buyout) plus related borrowing fees, plus yearly support and coordination fees during the term of this lease, subject to the approval of the Commissioner of Education, for a period of four (4) years; 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, 2026-27.

I. Approve the following resolution:

**FORT EDWARD SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGARDING ADVOCACY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

**WHEREAS**, the Fort Edward School District strives to provide an outstanding education and post-secondary pathway for each and every student; and

**WHEREAS**; the district recognizes the deep commitment shown by the legislature and the Executive to fully fund the foundation formula; and

**WHEREAS**, the District works diligently to meet the needs of all students while still fulfilling its core mission, even while in our third year of a pandemic, and

**WHEREAS**, the District is facing significant increased costs due to inflationary factors for labor, fuel and goods; and

**WHEREAS**, property tax levy legislation at the state level has provided an increased need for State Aid to maintain quality programs; and

**WHEREAS**, public schools are being asked to do more for students than ever before, so they are prepared for college, military or a career; and





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**WHEREAS**, each child in Fort Edward School District only has one opportunity to go through the full elementary and secondary educational experience;  
**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Fort Edward Board of Education calls on the New York State Legislature and Governor Kathy Hochul to act upon the following priorities:

1. Increase the \$30,000 threshold on BOCES Aid for Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers to \$60,000.
2. Workforce Development
  - a. Increase flexibility in teacher certification requirements to allow districts to more effectively utilize those teachers that they are able to hire.
  - b. Make adjustments to Tier 6 of the retirement system to help districts retain staff by making longevity more valuable.
3. Increase the spending limit for capital outlays to \$250,000 annually beginning in the 2024-25 school year.
4. Fund and Adjust the Foundation Formula
  - a. Include a due minimum increase for all districts, regardless of Foundation Aid phase-in level.
  - b. Maintain the “SAVE Harmless” provision.
  - c. Fully fund expense based aids.
  - d. Support for an initial evaluation of the current cost to educate a successful student.
5. Zero-Emission Buses
  - a. Evaluate all existing programs around transportation, capital and planning.
  - b. Make updates to all planning and funding streams to include costs related to planning and executing this transition.

**XII. Designations**

- A. Motion made by Audra Aul, seconded by Sarah Buschynski to appoint Bradley West as CSE/CPSE Chairperson. Motion carried 5-0.

**XIII. Personnel**

*All appointments are subject to change and compensation proration, pending emergency school closing and required reductions in force. All coaching appointments are made pending completion and verification of all required coaching credentials, with the stipend per FETA contract commensurate with experience and no other salary or benefits. All coaching, extracurricular appointments are subject to reduction and compensation proration, pending final student enrollment numbers, and pending the outcome of any potential mergers and emergency school closings.*

Motion made by Timothy Clark, seconded by John Guglielmo to approve items A-V. Motion carried 5-0.

- A. Approve the following resolution:



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**WHEREAS**, Scoreboard Operators for the 2023-24 school year were previously appointed at a rate of \$50 per event.

**WHEREAS**, the rate of pay for Scoreboard Operators has been changed to \$50 for one game and \$75 for two games in the same night.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that any person previously appointed as a Scoreboard Operator for the 2023-24 school year be paid at the rate of \$50 for one game and \$75 for two games in the same night.

B. Approve the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, Shot Clock Operators for the 2023-24 school year were previously appointed at a rate of \$50 per event.

**WHEREAS**, the rate of pay for Shot Clock Operators has been changed to at a rate of \$40 for one game and \$60 for two games in the same night.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that any person previously appointed as a Shot Clock Operator for the 2023-24 school year be paid at the rate of \$40 for one game and \$60 for two games in the same night.

C. Approve the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, Bradley West was appointed at the November 6, 2023 Special Board of Education Meeting as .4 School Psychologist, effective November 7, 2023, at a rate of pay of \$61,620 (prorated), Step 12 MA+30, as per the FETA contract.

**WHEREAS**, there was a clerical error in the rate of pay for this appointment.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that Bradley West shall be appointed as .4 School Psychologist, effective November 7, 2023, at the corrected rate of pay of \$61,428 (prorated), Step 12 MA+30, as per the FETA contract.

- D. Accept the letter of resignation from Katherine Murphy, as Speech and Language Pathologist, effective December 14, 2023.
- E. Accept the letter of resignation from Joyce Long, as Director of Pupil Services, effective December 21, 2023.
- F. Appoint Heather Neron as Substitute Cleaner, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$15.81 per hour, as per the FESS Contract, pending fingerprinting clearance.
- G. Appoint Mia Seeley as Chaperone, effective December 8, 2023, at a rate of \$47 per event, as per the FETA Contract.
- H. Appoint Joanne Eggleston as Chaperone, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$47 per event, as per the FETA Contract.
- I. Appoint Abigail Erchak as Chaperone, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$47 per event, as per the FETA Contract.
- J. Appoint Jade Zagorski as Chaperone, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$47 per event, as per the FETA Contract.
- K. Appoint Sherry Genier as Chaperone, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$47 per event, as per the FETA Contract.
- L. Appoint Jason Carden as Substitute Bus Driver, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$22.00 per hour, as per the FESS Contract.
- M. Appoint Ryan Herman as Scoreboard Operator, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$50 for one game and \$75 for two games in the same night.



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- N. Appoint James Eggleston as Scoreboard Operator, effective December 8, 2023, at a rate of \$50 for one game and \$75 for two games in the same night.
- O. Appoint Kristina Bump as Scoreboard Operator, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$50 for one game and \$75 for two games in the same night.
- P. Appoint Gabrielle Durkee as Shot Clock Operator, effective December 8, 2023, at a rate of \$40 for one game and \$60 for two games in the same night.
- Q. Appoint Hillary Potter as Tutor, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$25.50 per hour, as per the FETA Contract.
- R. Appoint Susan MacKenzie as Tutor, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$25.50 per hour, as per the FETA Contract.
- S. Appoint Shauna Brown as Tutor, effective December 8, 2023, at a rate of \$25.50 per hour, as per the FETA Contract.
- T. Appoint Gary Basle as Tutor, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$25.50 per hour, as per the FETA Contract.
- U. Appoint Peter Duveen as Tutor, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$25.50 per hour, as per the FETA Contract.
- V. Appoint Stephanie Sheldrick as Tutor, effective December 12, 2023, at a rate of \$25.50 per hour, as per the FETA Contract.

**XIV. Coaching**

- A. Motion made by John Guglielmo, seconded by Sarah Buschynski to accept the letter of resignation from Catherine Briscoe, as Co-JV Softball Coach, effective December 6, 2023. Motion carried 5-0.

**XV. Second Public Comment Period - None**

**XVI. Adjournment**

- Motion made by John Guglielmo, seconded by Sarah Buschynski to adjourn the meeting at 8:26pm. Motion carried 5-0.