

**Minutes of the Special Session  
of the Salem School Committee  
Monday, November 4, 2024  
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.  
Hybrid Meeting**

**Members Present:** Mayor Dominick Pangallo, Vice Chair Cruz, Amanda Campbell, Beth Anne Cornell, AJ Hoffman, Mary Manning, and Veronica Miranda

**Others in Attendance:** Superintendent Stephen Zrike and Deputy Superintendent Carbone

**Members Absent:** None

**Call of Meeting to Order**

Mayor Pangallo called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

**Saltonstall Middle School Grades Discussion**

Superintendent Zrike spoke about the results from surveys as well as emails received from community members. Superintendent Zrike believed that this is the right recommendation for middle grade classes at Saltonstall School to be transferred to Collins Middle School.

There was a discussion of whether the students from Saltonstall can be grouped together. Comments included that it might not be a good idea but that there was precedent based on circumstances. There were also comments that this might be best left to the administration and suggestions for the administration to report back to the School Committee.

In terms of transportation, Superintendent Zrike said that there is capacity in the middle school buses but that an analysis of how many of the Saltonstall students would qualify has not been done yet. There was a discussion about the pros and cons on whether transportation should be provided for a limited period.

The perception of families and students about Collins Middle School was also discussed as opposed to the real experiences of students at Collins. Comments were made that the transition should include informing families of all the programs, events and activities at the Collins Middle School. There was also a comment that the survey results showed that the teachers at Saltonstall were in favor of the transition. Superintendent Zrike said that it is much more difficult to replicate the middle school experience at Saltonstall School because of limited resources.

There were also comments about whether it would be better to move the rising grade 6-8 Saltonstall students at the same time or use a staggered approach. Other potential upcoming

changes such as the new high school configuration was also discussed but it was pointed out that this change is about 5- 7 years from now whereas the move from Saltonstall to Collins is going to benefit students immediately. One comment cautioned about the appearance of instability if changes are made frequently.

A question was raised about whether the 8th grade pilot program at the Collins Middle School would expand to other grades. Superintendent Zrike said the goal was to expand to the 7th and 6th grades. Superintendent Zrike said the data is compelling that students at Saltonstall feel more disengaged than Collins. Further discussion ensued about supports for the incoming 8th graders as they will have two transitions in a very short period. Alternative programs and pathways were also discussed.

Suggestions were made that feedback from Saltonstall students who would be affected would be helpful. Superintendent Zrike said that the Principals at both Saltonstall and Collins have enabled a lot of joint activities between the middle school students at both schools. Principal Jellison commented that one of the activities at the Saltonstall School is the mentorship where the middle schoolers would do activities with students in the lower grades.

More data by grade level was sought about the middle schoolers such as absenteeism, achievements, and disciplinary incidents. Principal Jellison said that the students who were most upset about the proposal were the 7th graders. Principal Jellison also said that lately there has been an increase of multilingual learners and students on IEPs enrolling in the middle school grades. Superintendent Zrike said that the enrollment is also probably affected by the proximity of homes to the school.

Discussions continued about what aspect the School Committee would vote on and what would be left to the administration to carry out. Superintendent Zrike suggested that a transition document could be created. One of the comments from members included having some of the aspects of a transition plan in place before voting on the matter.

### **Adjournment**

Vice Chair Cruz made a motion to adjourn at 6:47 pm. Member Miranda seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Member Campbell voted YES

Member Cornell voted YES

Vice Chair Cruz voted YES

Member Hoffman voted YES

Member Manning voted YES

Member Miranda voted YES

Mayor Pangallo voted YES

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

***Shirley Dorai***

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent