

3 BOE Meetings since last PTO mtg. 11/13, 11/18, & 12/16

11/13/14

Special Meeting to address college acceptance rates and High school principal/agent.

College acceptance rates that were listed were self reported and may not be accurate. Other schools have guidance counselors who input the data but Nisky does not due to cuts.

High School Principal and sports agent was discussed at length. Basically, John Rickert described how he does his high school job during the day and he has staff who address any sports agent things during the day. He is unavailable for sports agent deals during day time hours. Other people handle the day to day activities. He stated what he does do at the high school. Performance evals especially. He attends many school activities during the evenings as well. (See attached).

11/18/14

1. Held at Iroquois with presentation from WIRO students/faculty.
2. Teacher at Rosendale Roseann Maurantonio was the sole New York recipient of the Milken Educator Award for 2014.
3. Superintendent searches were held in November and on line surveys are going well.
4. 14 High school students signed letters of intent to attend Division 1 colleges and universities and participate in athletics next year.
5. Author and alumnus Anne Blankman author of Prisoner of Night and Fog returned this month and did special visits with middle and high school students.
6. Author and alumnus Elizabeth Rosner spoke about her book Electric City at the library.
7. Rosendale PTO is partnering with Woodlawn Elementary School as pen pals as well as visits. Both teachers are married and formed this partnership.
8. Hillside had an assembly to celebrate their Blue Ribbon award.
9. Birchwood 4 & 5th grade chorus sang National Anthem at RPI hockey game in November.
10. High School Craft fair great success
11. There were 85 student who ran the 2nd annual VA turkey trot.
12. Science director Jackie Carrese submitted a National Science Foundation Grant in collaboration with parenters wuch as RPI & GE
13. Board is looking for different ways to include more student input. Superintendent is going to ask a group of high school students he has been meeting with for some feedback.
14. Study session for Middle school programs. Talked about the work that goes into the academic, social and emotional needs of the over 1,000 middle school students.

12/16/14

1. Superintendent discussed a conversation with Birchwood PTO about the playground. He had an evaluation of the playground and it was found to be unsafe and will be dismantled. Says it should be the districts obligation to replace a fundamental playground with additional playground from the PTO or parents. Will discuss where to take the money from for the fundamental playground.
2. General Mills has supplied a hot/cold cart for the high school . Very exciting!
3. Speech and debate team has secured a club advisor.
4. Lynne Wells discussed the superintendent search. Which will start in Winter, 2014. On line surveys are going great.
5. Lease to Center for Disability Services for parking lots space at Hillside site (15,000 sq. feet).
6. Study Session for High School programs and services ----I left before that.

NISKAYUNA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL MEETING – THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2014¹

7:00 P.M.

KEY TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. College Acceptance Rates | Superintendent |
| 2. High School Principal and Sports Agent | |
| a) Legal Considerations | Hank Sobota, Esq. |
| b) How Can He Do Both? | John Rickert |
| 3. Adjournment | Board President |

¹ This meeting will be held in the Van Antwerp Auditorium located at 1239 Van Antwerp Road, Niskayuna, New York and will begin at 7:00 p.m.

NISKAYUNA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION

REGULAR MEETING – NOVEMBER 18, 2014¹
AGENDA

W = Written
O = Oral
I = Information
A = Action

STUDENTS FIRST

Iroquois Middle School – WIRO Broadcast Studio

1. Approval of Agenda Board President W/A
2. Approval of Proposed Minutes Board President W/A
 - a) Board of Education - Regular Meeting November 5, 2014
3. Comments O/I
 - a) Superintendent
 - b) Board Members
 - c) Community – Privilege of the Floor²
4. Student Placements Lynne Rutnik W/A
 - a) CSE, CPSE and 504 Committees and Agreed Upon Amendments
5. Instruction
6. Personnel
 - a) Regular Staffing Actions Michael Dutkowsky W/A
7. Business Carrie Nyc-Chevrier W/A
 - a) Quarterly Budget Status Report
 - b) Treasurer's Report – September and October
 - c) School Lunch Report - October
 - d) Return of Uncollected Taxes – Albany and Saratoga Counties
 - e) ERS Standard Work Day Request
8. Other Items
 - a) Discussion on Student Input

STUDY SESSION

TOPIC: Middle School Programs and Services

9. Adjournment Board President O/A

¹ This meeting will be held in the Cafeteria of Iroquois Middle School located at 2495 Rosendale Road, Niskayuna, New York and will begin at 6:30 p.m.

² Privilege of the floor shall be extended to persons who wish to share their thoughts with the Board of Education. Each speaker is requested to complete the speaker form and submit it to the Board President prior to the meeting. The Board of Education reserves the right to limit this portion of comments to 30 minutes in order to complete its public business in an efficient fashion. Additional comments will be taken prior to adjournment.

**NISKAYUNA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

REGULAR MEETING – DECEMBER 16, 2014¹
AGENDA (*Revised*)

W = Written O = Oral I = Information A = Action
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RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST AND NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT CONTEST SEMI-FINALISTS
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|---|---------------------|-----|
| 1. Approval of Agenda | Board President | W/A |
| 2. Approval of Proposed Minutes | Board President | W/A |
| a) Board of Education - Regular Meeting November 18, 2014 | | |
| 3. Comments | | O/I |
| a) Superintendent | | |
| b) <i>Lynne Wells – Interim Report on Superintendent Search</i> | | |
| c) Board Members | | |
| d) Community – Privilege of the Floor ² | | |
| 4. Student Placements | Lynne Rutnik | W/A |
| a) CSE, CPSE and 504 Committees and Agreed Upon Amendments | | |
| 5. Instruction | Ed Alston | O/I |
| a) International Scholars Program | | |
| 6. Personnel | | |
| a) Regular Staffing Actions | Michael Dutkowsky | W/A |
| 7. Business | | |
| a) Approval of Lease | Carrie Nyc-Chevrier | W/A |
| b) Tax Certiorari | | |
| c) Treasurer's Report | | |
| d) Budget Transfers | | |
| e) School Lunch Report - November | | |
| f) Return of Uncollected Taxes – Niskayuna and Glenville | | |
| g) Bid Award – Football Equipment Reconditioning Services | | |
| 8. Other Items | | |
| a) Other | | |

STUDY SESSION

TOPIC: High School Programs and Services
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- | | | |
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| 9. Adjournment | Board President | O/A |
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¹ This meeting will be held in the Van Antwerp Auditorium at 1239 Van Antwerp Road, Niskayuna, New York and will begin at 7:00 p.m.

² Privilege of the floor shall be extended to persons who wish to share their thoughts with the Board of Education. Each speaker is requested to complete the speaker form and submit it to the Board President prior to the meeting. The Board of Education reserves the right to limit this portion of comments to 30 minutes in order to complete its public business in an efficient fashion. Additional comments will be taken prior to adjournment.

I would like to begin by thanking the district for offering me this opportunity to address this issue tonight. I have often thought that this would be excellent idea and I hope that this alleviates any and all controversy surrounding me.

The district has been going in a great direction under Superintendent John Yagielski's leadership and we should continue our focus on our students. I understand the scrutiny that am under as public official serving as a high school principal in a public school. I further understand the scrutiny that I am under in owning a business that is high profile and deals with contracts for professional athletes.

I became aware of Mr. Swyers' book over the summer. I cannot speak to any of the circumstances that he writes about in this novel regarding youth baseball. However, with regard to the character created based on me, there are blatant inaccuracies, accusations and false innuendos under the auspices that it is a "novel based on factual events". Thus, it gives the reader an impression that his descriptions of me are factual. From this book attention was turned to data on his website about our college acceptance data. We now know, by the most accurate data that we have available, that we have a 72% acceptance to the schools that Mr. Swyers listed, and not a 49% that he shows on his website.

Tonight, it is my hope that I will have the opportunity to explain any of my professional endeavors to you. I also wish to clearly address any questions that you may have regarding how I conduct myself as a highly effective principal as defined by New York State, and also serve the president and owner of a company.

I am by no means alone as an educator with multiple interests. There are superintendents at other school districts in our area who own businesses or parts of businesses. There are college presidents at both private and public institutions who the board of directors of companies and receive compensation for their expertise. I know many administrators in the Capital Region who have investments in or own timeshares, thoroughbred racehorses, restaurants, landscaping businesses, consulting companies, etc. I would submit to you that these folks are some of the most talented administrators in the area.

I began my work in the professional sports world as a consultant for Peter Schaffer. Peter is now one of my attorneys and current partner. He is based in Denver, Colorado. Peter taught me everything that I know about sports contracts. As time went on, players were comfortable with me handling their contracts. In 2003, I formed my own company with 2 other individuals, so that I can continue my focus on my work as principal and they could concentrate on developing the business. This ended in 2011, as I left this company and started JR Sports Enterprises. Today, I now have 17 associates working for the company, including a director who is in charge of each division. All 17 of these people report directly to Peter Schaffer. He is in charge of my entire operation and the day-to-day management and I own the company. Mr. Schaffer shared with former superintendent Susan Salvaggio and school district attorney Hank Sabota that he ran the day to day operations of the company in July of 2013. Mr. Sabota asked for clarification from Mr. Schaffer about the business and Mr. Schaffer offered to give him any information that he wanted and provided his direct contact number.

My ownership of JR Sports Enterprises is not in violation of any New York State law, State Education regulation, Niskayuna Central School District policy or any contractually agreed upon provision. However, it is not solely my interest to meet letter of the law. I want to go above and beyond and be a great high school principal and a great public servant. I want the very best for our students, our staff, our school and our community. I have worked extremely hard over the years to lead our school in the right direction! I have never compromised our students' safety or needs.

There are several pieces of data that demonstrate that I am an instructional leader of Niskayuna High School with a committed and talented staff and our focus is on student achievement:

1. Niskayuna is the 26th rated high school in the country by criteria utilized by *Newsweek Magazine*.
2. Niskayuna is the #1 rated high school by the *Albany Business Review*.
3. Niskayuna finished the 2013-2014 school year with a 97% cohort graduation rate, the highest in the area.
4. Niskayuna finished the 2013-2014 school year with a 99% cohort state assessment passing rate on the 5 required Regents examinations and thus, we were named a "Reward School" by the State Education Department.
5. In the 2013-2014 school year, 91% of our students who took AP exams scored a "3" or higher.
6. In the fall of 2012, *US News and World Report* determined that Niskayuna High School was the top performing high school in all of upstate New York.
7. As a principal, my stated mandated composite score was a 91 and 95 respectively for the past two school-years, making me a highly effective principal as defined by New York State.

These are all factual statistics of information that are all undisputed and irrefutable.

Despite these achievements, there is a perception among some in our community that I am not a full-time dedicated principal. Well, there are several pieces of evidence that I would like to introduce to you tonight to dispel that perception.

I preface this next section by stating that many of the things that I do for our district and our students are done with no intention of receiving recognition or commendation. I am not looking for any special acknowledgements. I simply wish to give you better understanding of the body of work that I have put in over the last 20 years of my employment and the magnitude of my commitment to our school and our students.

1. Engagement and Commitment:

My attendance record is exceptional over the course of my 20 years of employment with the district. Since being named principal in 2001, I have arrived each day between 6 am and 6:30 am and have stayed as long as needed to get work done. I also work an average of 3 evenings per week at school district events. Over the course of any given school year, there are at least 5 occurrences where I came to work on a Saturday or Sunday. In 2002, I held a Section 3214 due process hearing for a student on a Saturday evening after a dance that lasted until 1:30 am because the student insisted that he was innocent of the charges and should not be suspended. In 2003, there was one occasion where I stayed overnight at school and only took a brief nap in my office in order to assist Dr. Baughman in meeting a state deadline. In 2004, while my son was having a medical procedure, I left the hospital to return to school because the school had gone to a "lockout" due to something that a student wrote on the internet. In 2006, Dr. Baughman and I worked in his office until 8 pm on a Friday night collating data for a Board presentation that next Monday. In 2008, I accompanied a student to the hospital who was transported by ambulance because she was intoxicated. I remained with her until 3 am when her parents arrived from being out of town. In 2009, on a Sunday evening in October, while attending the World Series with my dad in Philadelphia, I secured alternative transportation to get me back to Albany because the game went into extra innings and there were no more commercial flights available that would get me home in time to be in my office in time for school on Monday. Before the start of the 2010 school year, I created a binder for each and every faculty and staff member in the high school. The binder included a hand-written personalized note to each staff member with an expression of thanks tied to their specific role in the high school. In 2010, I missed an awards dinner where my wife was receiving a community service award because it conflicted with a Board of Education meeting where I was presenting the code of conduct. In August of 2011, I cut a vacation with my family short in order to get back home to be at the wake and funeral for a student who passed away in a tragic accident. In 2012, I set up an alternative Physical Education program for a student where we met at school at 6 a.m. for 3 days a week so that he could get the necessary credit to graduate. He couldn't fit PE in his schedule due to his Vo-Tec requirements. I am currently providing AIS instruction in social studies to a 5th year student who only needs to pass the exam in order to graduate. These are just a few of the examples that I can recall from the past 14 years that exemplify my commitment to our high school and our district.

2. Commitment to Students:

In 2005, I created a team that studied the graduation rates of our students and planned specific interventions and strategies to improve our overall graduation rates. Over my 14 years as principal, I have personified the “Whatever it takes approach”. I have personally gone to student’s houses with a school social worker to bring kids to school. I have tutored students in preparation for Regents exams. I have anonymously paid for SAT’s, AP Exams, prom tickets, parking passes, student lunches, student scholarships out of my own pocket without anyone ever knowing about it. I don’t want this information to be known, but I feel that it is important for you to get a sense of how much I care about our kids. I have successfully mentored Niskayuna High School students and helped guide them away from unhealthy decisions. I have personally called college admissions offices and college coaches on behalf of our students. Many times, I am able to facilitate a successful outcome for our students. Last year, I played an instrumental role in a student receiving a scholarship from Cornell. Each year, I write over a dozen college recommendation letters for our students. I have helped our graduates secure internships and employment through my network of contacts throughout the country. Just this past week, I was on the phone with the University of Pennsylvania for one of our seniors and I wrote an employment recommendation for a student from the Class of 2009. My commitment to our students comes very naturally to me. It’s instinctual. It’s not forced, contrived or staged. Anyone who sees me approach students in the hallway could not come away with any other conclusion except that I truly care about them.

3. Instructional Leadership:

This is one of the most overlooked aspects of my leadership. The principal of a high school of our size needs to be an expert manager. In addition, it is vital that the principal also is a strong leader in curriculum or assessments. This is an important aspect to me in my leadership at the high school. I have spent my own time reading and learning the Danielson rubrics. The quality of my teacher performance reviews has improved dramatically over the last 2 years. Many teachers look forward to my visits to their classroom because my reports are so detailed. Everything that I offer is tied to sound pedagogical practices. I identify each specific instructional practice and provide suggestive feedback as to the effectiveness of the instruction. I receive annual reports on the item analysis for all of the New York Regents exams and compare year to year and teacher to teacher results. I have met privately with teachers to ask for a scope and sequence of activities and tied their instructional practices to the assessments. I am considered a curriculum expert in social studies and business education. I also have strong expertise and experience providing proper accommodations pursuant to a student IEP in the least restrictive environment.

4. Development of leaders:

I played a key role in the selection and development of Dave Wetzel and was instrumental in his transition to become the principal at Colonie, and now Lisha Kill Middle School. I also worked with and nurtured the professional development of Shelley Baldwin-Nye who is now an elementary principal at Glencliff. I successfully nominated her for YMCA Educator of the year (2008) and CAPSA administrator of the year (2014). In 2005, I made strong case to Dr. Baughman to allow Mark Treanor to transition as an assistant principal at the high school. As good as Mark is at what he does, he would be the first to tell you that I have offered him key guidance in the handling of several issues.

5. Recognition by area administrators:

Over the past 14 years as principal of Niskayuna High School, it has been very important to me to contribute to my profession and serve as a leader. I have been named the president of the Suburban Scholastic Council on two different occasions by my fellow principal colleagues. I am the current president of the Council and I represent the best curricular and co-curricular interests of the council. I have been called to give my expert opinions on matters by several organizations in representing the Council. I am considered one of the leading experts in the area in matters related to school jurisdiction in disciplinary issues and collective bargaining. I receive calls from area principals asking for my opinions on academic and school climate issues. I applied for the position of Superintendent of Schools for the Colonie Central School district in 2008. The search consultant who interviewed me said that if I ever wanted to go to a small district to get experience as a superintendent, he had several districts that he was working with who would want to talk to me.

6. Recognition as a Leader in the Community:

I have attended numerous community functions and represented our district well. I have appeared and spoken at many high level events without compensation, including a child abuse seminar at Temple University. I have been a part of many committees, expert panels, faith community projects and fundraisers for various causes. I volunteer my time and talent for many causes and the requests have tripled in the past 2 years. I was named the Leukemia Lymphoma Society's Man of the Year in 2014.

In conclusion, I would like to make 3 key points that I have substantially addressed in this statement:

1. I am a full-time, fully committed principal to the students, staff and community of Niskayuna.
2. I have exhibited a record of student-centered achievement in my 14 years as principal while creating a vision that has been consistent with the district's philosophy.
3. There is no doubt in my mind that I am serving as a highly effective high school principal, who places top priority on the needs of the students, staff and district, while also owning a high profile business at the same time.

I will now take questions related to my performance and commitment as the principal of Niskayuna High School: